

Amateur Photographer

Pet subjects

The fabulous winners of **Dog Photographer of the Year**



Passionate about photography since 1884

LENS SPECIAL



TESTED

11 bargain lenses you should try

Have fun with these curious optics **from just £20**

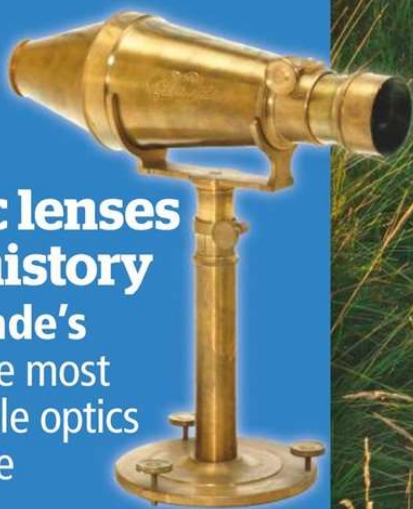


6 lens rental firms rated

Can't afford that new lens? **Hire it.** Find out where

10 classic lenses from history

John Wade's pick of the most memorable optics ever made



Stay sharp

How you can achieve maximum sharpness **without a tripod**



Tilt-shift masterclass

How to keep your **verticals straight** or get creative



SKYLINE

Who said quality is always expensive?

Skyline is the new collection of lightweight shoulder bags with a minimalist design built from water repellent fabrics and YKK® zippers. Available in black or grey, the range includes five sizes to fit everything from a mirrorless camera with a kit lens, to a larger DSLR body with a 70-200 f/2.8 attached and a number of additional lenses.

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Our annual lens special issue is one of our most important of the year because your lens is arguably the most important part of your camera. A fantastic lens on a cheap camera is arguably preferable to a budget kit lens on a pro camera. This year we have a great selection of lens-related features. Now Sigma and Tamron have gone upmarket they have left a gap at the budget end, which is

being rapidly filled by companies, many from China and Korea, producing a plethora of interesting optics. Find out what we thought of 11 sub-£200 lenses on page 48. Meanwhile, at the top end of the market lenses have never been better, but at a cost. Sometimes hiring a lens makes more sense, so we've tested six lens hire companies for you (see page 42). We also look at tilt-shift lenses and past classics. Enjoy!
Nigel Atherton, Editor

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amateurphotographer magazine

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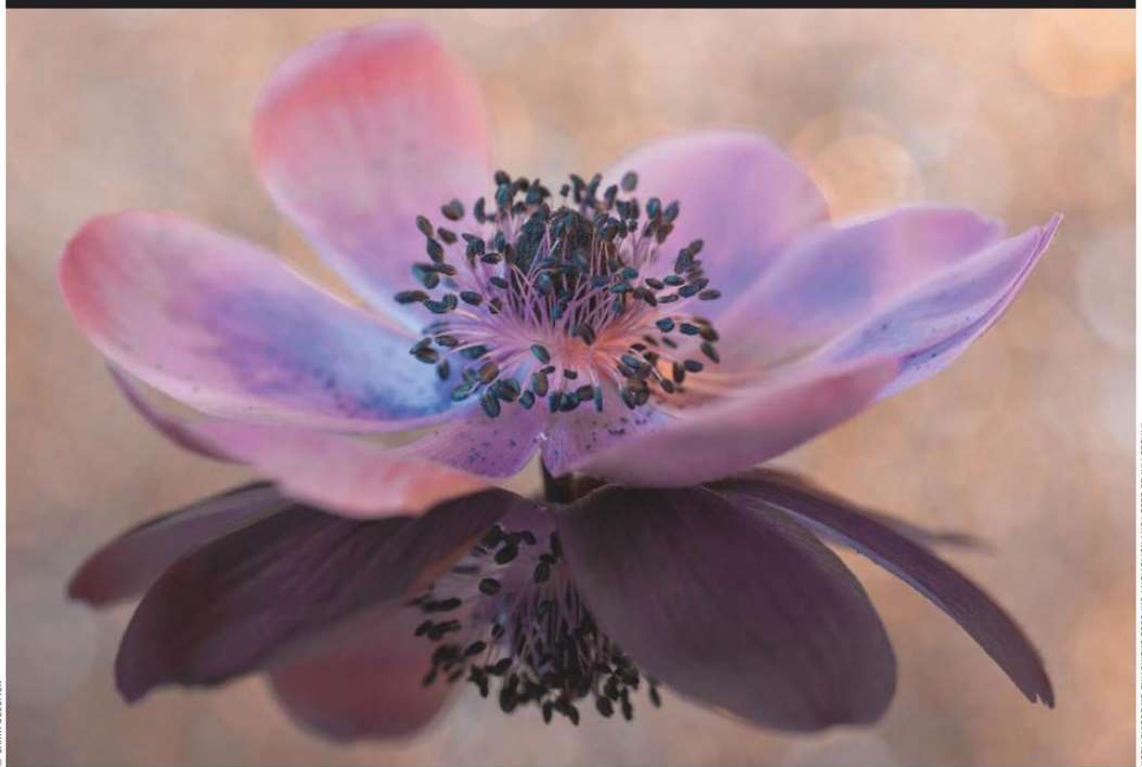
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ONLINE PICTURE OF THE WEEK



© GARRY SOLOMON

Floating by Garry Solomon

Nikon D750, 90mm, 1/60sec at f/10, ISO 200

This beautiful floating anemone was uploaded to our Twitter page using the hashtag #appicoftheweek. It was taken by photographer Garry Solomon. He tells us, 'Anemones have kept me pretty busy throughout April, May and June, and have quickly become one of my favourite flowers to photograph. This

shot utilises a headed flower on black acrylic to reflect the backdrop. I used a slightly narrower aperture to give a good level of detail on the seed head, and a soft golden bokeh from the artificial lighting. A circular polariser helps to ensure the flower is reflected in the acrylic and makes the colours pop.'

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Win! Each week we choose our favourite picture on Facebook, Instagram, Flickr, Twitter or the reader gallery using #appicoftheweek. PermaJet proudly supports the online picture of the week winner, who will receive a top-quality print of their image on the finest PermaJet paper*. It is important to bring images to life outside the digital sphere, so we encourage everyone to get printing today! Visit www.permajet.com to learn more.

Send us your pictures

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Email Email a selection of low-res images (up to 5MB of attachments in total) to appicturedesks@ti-media.com.

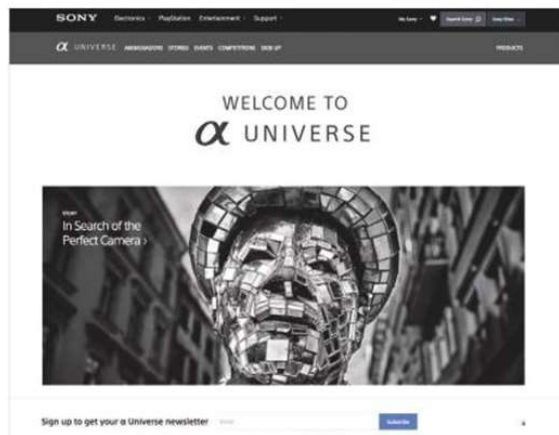
CD/DVD Send us a disc of high-resolution JPEG, TIFF or PSD images (at least 2480 pixels along its longest length), with a contact sheet, to the address on page 24.

Via our online communities Post your pictures into our Flickr group, Facebook page, Twitter feed, or the gallery on our website. See details above.

Transparencies/prints Well-packaged prints or slides (without glass mounts) should be sent by Special Delivery, with a return SAE, to the address on page 24.

NEWS ROUND-UP

This week in brief, edited by Geoff Harris and Hollie Latham Hucker



Sony goes universal

A new website for Sony users in Europe has been launched, called Sony Alpha Universe Europe. It will include articles on Sony ambassadors, how-to guides, photo and video competitions, details of local events where you can try the latest Sony products and relevant news. See www.sony.co.uk/alphauniverse

New Kodak pro film

Kodak Professional Pro Image 100, a new 35mm colour negative film, is now on sale. Parent company Kodak Alaris said that it 'delivers excellent sharpness for prints and enlargements'. The film is available through all dealers in Europe stocking Kodak films. See bit.ly/newkodakfilm.



Fujifilm's hire power

Fujifilm and Hirecamera have teamed up to offer a new 'try before you buy' scheme, whereby those who hire kit will have the cost of their hire refunded (up to a value of £250) if they decide to buy the camera or lens from the dealer. It's available now and a full list of eligible Fujifilm products can be found at www.hirecamera.com.

Benro cuts tripod head prices

Benro has reinstated its G2 and G3 low profile, triple-action tripod ball heads and cut the price. The company puts the move down to increased customer demand for the heads, which are made from magnesium alloy and suited for DSLRs with longer lenses. The G2 is now £170 and the G3 is £210. See www.benroeu.com.



July marred by travel photo tragedies

Everyone loves dramatic travel shots but you've got to put safety first. Popular travel YouTubers Ryker Gamble and Alexey Lyakh, and Lyakh's girlfriend, Megan Scraper, died in early July after falling over Shannon Falls in Canada. And top Chinese tycoon Wang Jian fell to his death while taking shots in Bonnieux, France.

©ALICIA PRUSINSKA

BIG picture

Winners of Dog Photographer of the Year 2018 announced

The winners of the Kennel Club's 13th Dog Photographer of the Year competition have been announced. This year the 1st Placed Winner of the Oldies category, depicting a moody portrait of Noa the Great Dane, scooped the overall winning title. (See page 18.) A number of images that just missed out



on being in the top three of each category got a Judges' Special Mention, such as this image that was entered into the Puppies category. The photographer, 22-year old Alicja Zmyslowska from Poland, says, 'This photo of Tissaia, a two-month-old working line Border Collie, is showing how strongly focused, intense and even serious she is. I tried to emphasise this with vibrant colours of spring in the background and foreground.'

Words & numbers

A photograph isn't necessarily a lie, but nor is it the truth. It's more of a fleeting, subjective impression

Martine Franck

Belgian photographer (1938- 2012)

220°

Angle of view offered by
Nikon's 1972 6mm f/2.8
Fisheye-Nikkor (see page 56)

SOURCE: NIKON



The winning image shows some masterful timing and composition, via a home-made diffuser

Societies' wildlife contest goes global

THE SOCIETY of International Nature and Wildlife Photographers has announced the winners of its Discovering Nature Photography Competition. Entrants were asked to submit images that show the beauty of nature, including animals, insects, wildlife, flora and fauna, and the overall victor has been named as Agniswar Ghosal from Bolpur, India.

Agniswar, who beat 400 other contestants, bags 12 months' membership of The Society of International Nature and Wildlife Photographers (SINWP), a pair of Tasco binoculars and photo lens clip. The winning image, of a green lynx spider, was taken with a Nikon D5200 combined with Tamron 90mm f/2.8 lens, external flash and a hand-made diffuser. His winning image is called 'Predator - Green Lynx Spider, Prey - Beetle'.

'The Discovering Nature competition did not disappoint, with

a wonderful selection of stunning and colourful shots,' said Phil Jones, the Societies' CEO. 'Agniswar's image was chosen as the winner because it perfectly fits the theme of the competition.'

Second place was awarded to Achintya Adhikari from Kolkata, India, and third place was awarded

jointly to Alan Jones and Darron Matthews. For more information on the winning pictures, and to see the other 21 highly commended images, go to: <http://sinwp.com/dn/hc.htm>.

The Societies is the umbrella organisation for a wide range of specialist photography groups and runs regular monthly competitions.



This stunning image, which got the second prize, was also taken in India



Leica releases lots of firmware updates

LEICA Camera has released a series of extensive firmware updates for the Leica M10, Leica Q, Leica CL, Leica TL2 and Leica T/TL camera models. Just a few of the highlights include an additional continuous shooting mode on the M10 (Continuous Low Speed, three fps); enhanced power-saving mode and Fn button customisation on the Leica Q, plus faster DNG processing; the ability to shift AF points using the d-pad controller on the Leica CL when using the electronic viewfinder and Touch AF mode; and greater Focus Peaking flexibility on the Leica TL2. The firmware updates are available from www.leica-camera.com, or you can have them installed for free in all Leica Stores.



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Handy if you use a variety of flash systems and lighting solutions

Lastolite gets flash with new softbox

LASTOLITE, part of Manfrotto, has announced the Ezybox Pro, which is part of the world's first softbox range designed to fit battery flash, portable flash and studio flash from all major flash manufacturers. It means photographers who shoot with different types of flash just have to carry one softbox and switch between different flash systems using connectors, without adjusting the softbox itself. Manfrotto claims that the new unit is very easy to assemble too, because it's built around a collapsible RapidExoframe, which remains attached at all times to the Ezybox Pro

softbox frame, the interface for the many different compatible flash units. The softbox fabric also remains attached to the RapidExoframe and slides along the structure once assembled and clips into position at both ends. The 25x150cm softbox offers a 6:1 strip-light proportion and includes inner and outer diffuser panels, along with a removable honeycomb grid to prevent light spill. The Ezybox Pro can also be used in the vertical and horizontal position, and has a suggested retail price of £329. See www.manfrotto.co.uk/lastolite.

Back in the day

A wander through the AP archive. This week we pay a visit to July 1982



LAST week we looked at an old copy of AP from 1962; fast forward 20 years and you can see that the editors still reached for a swimsuit model when deciding what to put on summer covers – if it ain't broke don't fix it, right? This issue's model is bit more racy-looking, however. Either way, the rather flat cover lines don't do justice to some of the great content in this issue. A particular highlight is a piece on Steve Benbow, who was part of a long tradition of left-wing/socially concerned documentary photographers shooting in black & white (they're now a somewhat endangered species). Benbow had some great advice for young photographers about keeping copyright. On a less serious note, there's also a slightly oddball feature about buying T-shirts with camera logos on. The editor had been wanting to get it off his chest for a while...

A monopod called Alan...

NEVER let it be said that Three Legged Thing's products have boring names, and a new range of monopods and foot stabilisers continues this slightly unhinged tradition – giving nods to Bletchley Park and 90s industrial metal along the way. The wartime code-breaking pioneers are remembered with Alan, named after Alan Turing. The new monopod has a stored height of 45cm, and extends to a maximum height of 1.49m. 'Formed from eight layers of 100% pure carbon fibre and aircraft-grade alloys, ensuring he is both light and incredibly strong, Alan can support a maximum load of 60kg/132 lb – almost 100x his own weight,' said the company. Another monopod, Trent, is named after Nine Inch Nails' Trent Reznor, and extends to over 2m, making it one of the tallest monopods you can buy. Trent is made from aircraft-grade magnesium alloy, and has a maximum load capability of 30kg. Finally, Docz is a rugged foot stabiliser with a 30cm base, designed to add stability to monopods. Arriving on 1 August, Alan costs £129.99, Trent £109.99 and Docz £49.99. See 3leggedthing.com.



Three Legged Thing's new monopods, Alan and Trent, will be available in kits with the new Docz base



Keeping copyright on your work is still very desirable

For the latest news visit www.amateurphotographer.co.uk

Bookshelf

Dark City

The Real Los Angeles Noir

This stark collection of images reveal the dark underbelly of Los Angeles from the 1920s to the 1950s. **Oliver Atwell** steps inside

Edited by
Jim Heimann,
Taschen,
Price £75,
480 pages,
hardcover,
ISBN 978-3-
8365-6076-4

It's often been said that behind the California smile there lies a darkness. Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in Los Angeles, the densely populated city that acts as a beacon to those individuals seeking to make their name in film and television. The deep machinations of Hollywood have chewed up and spat out innumerable hordes over the past century and the surrounding city of LA has seen countless people succumb to the almost mythic levels of crime that has infested the society.

Unfortunately, the Los Angeles police force, charged with protecting the public from crime, has long been reported as a hotbed of Machiavellian corruption and bureaucratic scheming. This seedy face of LA, particularly during the period of the first half of the 20th century, has been a source of fascination for many writers and filmmakers, most notably the crime writer

James Ellroy, whose books *The Black Dahlia* and *LA Confidential* (both of which were later made into successful films) paint a very real picture of LA at this time.

Early 20th century LA has everything we look for in a juicy story: celebrity and scandal. *Dark City: The Real Los Angeles Noir* – a new book published by Taschen – does a fine job of providing enough guilty voyeuristic pleasures to hold any crime and noir fan's attention. Reading the book is like being served a lavish three-course meal while the waiter holds a gun to your head and the chef hotwires your car – you know you should feel scared and guilty, but the offerings are just so captivating and delicious.

Dark City is edited by Jim Heimann, a graphic designer, illustrator, teacher and author, who is fast becoming the go-to expert of early-to-mid-century America culture (we reviewed his book *LeRoy Grannis: Surf Photography* in our 7 July issue). Here, he uses his skills of history and design to bring together photographs, tabloid reproductions and magazine spreads to present a dark history of La La Land that refuses to shy away from the horrific reality of a city that promised glamour but instead provided decay and degradation.

Until 1892, Los Angeles was nothing more than a small, unremarkable town. Then something extraordinary happened – prospectors struck oil in Echo Park. Los Angeles was forever changed. Money poured in and with it came the dark shadow of lurid corruption. Just a few years later, filmmakers realised they could take advantage of California's blissful weather and work all year round by building studios in Los Angeles – Hollywood was born. This then brought about the explosive rise of the tabloid industry which could feed on the movie industry and the rise of crime in the city. It was a perfect storm. Los Angeles promised a utopia – but like many utopias, there was a rot just beneath the surface.

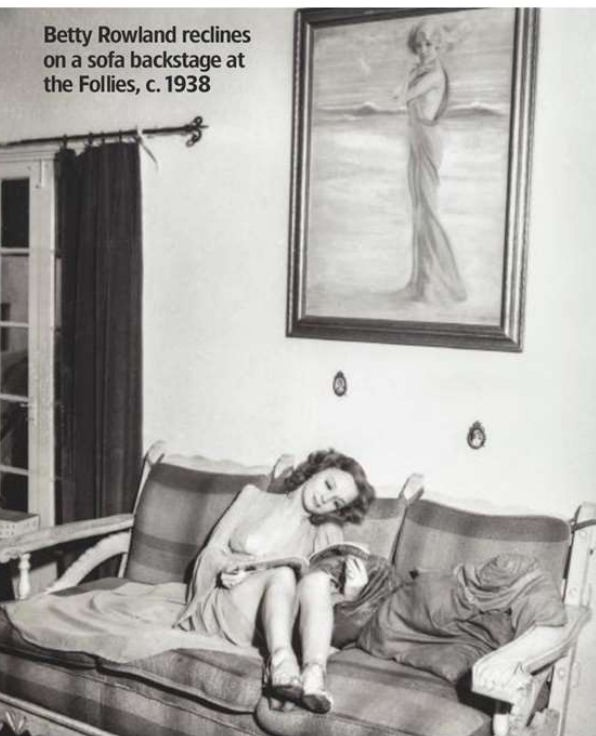


© JIM HEIMANN COLLECTION / COURTESY TASCHEN

'It's extraordinary to see the generous access the photographers were afforded in these early days'

This period of LA's history has long been a source of fascination for Heimann. He's been collecting images and documents for years, and it shows. *Dark City* is almost exhausting to look through. In image after image, we find shots and portraits of victims, perpetrators and celebrities, all of whom intermingle in this sun-soaked melting pot. The images give us access to the speakeasies, gin joints, roadhouses and burlesque clubs of the era. You can almost smell the sweat and feel the oppressive heat of these enclosed spaces on your skin. But the most intriguing images, inevitably, are the crime scenes. It's extraordinary to see the generous access photographers were afforded in these early days. The images take us right into the aftermath as we gaze down at the bodies lying on the ground and look on as a detective runs his fingers along the blade of a blood-stained murder weapon. The feeling you get bearing testament to

Betty Rowland reclines on a sofa backstage at the Folies, c. 1938





Two suspects are kept in check by a police officer in downtown LA



A reluctant suspect winces as a police officer takes things into his own hands



A cigar-chomping detective examines the murder weapon, c. 1940

these scenes is the same as when you look through the images of Weegee, who was busy working on the East Coast at around the same time.

While it would be easy to write off *Dark City* as a ghouls' bible, that just isn't the case. What the book tries, and succeeds, in doing is painting a deeply honest and

unflinching portrait of a particular period of LA's dark history. In other ways, perhaps, it shows that while the city's authorities have done all they can to give the illusion of 21st-century civility, Los Angeles is in many ways the same old city. It's just been given a fresh coat of paint.



Also out now

The latest and best books from the world of photography.



Dennis Hopper Photographs 1961-1967

By Dennis Hopper and Tony Shafrazi, Taschen, £45, 484 pages, hardback, ISBN 978-3-8365-7099-2



When he died in 2010, Dennis Hopper left behind not just an accomplished acting career but also a portfolio of photographs and artworks that established him as a true Renaissance man. In Hopper's later years he had become known as a respected but undeniable chewer

of scenery. But perhaps these larger-than-life performances pointed more towards an individual who was unafraid to approach life with maximum force. If proof were needed, then this reprinted book, first published in 2011, will surely make the point felt. Hopper was no dilettante – his handling of the camera was organic and natural, and his eye for what was photographically worthy was refined. Between 1961 and 1967, he surrounded himself with some of the most fascinating cultural figures of the decade, including Martin Luther King, Andy Warhol and Paul Newman. This set of images helps to establish him as one of the late 20th century's most fascinating American figures.

★★★★★ **Oliver Atwell**

Modern Forms

By Nicolas Groszpiere, Prestel, £19.99, 224 pages, paperback, ISBN 978-3-7913-8431-3



Modernist architecture is often a reflection of political and social ideologies. It's something that photographer Nicolas Groszpiere is acutely aware of and he has travelled across Europe, North and South America, the Middle East and

Asia to take images of structures built between 1920 and 1989. These images originally appeared on his blog and then in a hardback book. This compact edition may be reduced in size but it is no less impactful. Some of these buildings are truly extraordinary and almost all reflect something of the society in which they were constructed. It's a fascinating approach to architectural photography and well worth tracking down.

★★★★★ **Oliver Atwell**



Viewpoint Andy Westlake

A new wave of Chinese lens makers is emerging, and some are bound to become mainstream brands in the future

Over the past decade or so, we've seen an unusual state of affairs develop in the photographic market. Historically, the big-name camera makers have been surrounded by a plethora of smaller third-party lens brands, all aiming to provide decent quality optics at a keen price. You only have to look on eBay to find a host of near-forgotten names from the 1970s and 80s, such as Clubman, Hanimex, Sirius and Vivitar. But the era of the autofocus SLR saw the mainstream field consolidate down to essentially just Sigma, Tamron and Tokina, with Zeiss and Voigtlander catering to a high-end niche. However with the 'big two' of Sigma and Tamron both making the strategic decision to shift upmarket, the situation has become ripe for disruption.

First to take advantage of this vacuum at the lower end of the market has been the Korean firm Samyang, initially with a range of highly regarded manual-focus primes. But recently it has progressed to making autofocus lenses for both DSLRs and mirrorless cameras, which should bring it a much greater share of the enthusiast market. Make no mistake, it's now a serious player, and will only become bigger.

Another brand we've been following with interest is Laowa (from the Chinese firm Venus Optics), which is currently in a similar situation to where Samyang was

half a decade ago, making a range of optically excellent manual-focus lenses. It's one of several companies, alongside accessories makers such as Benro and Sirui, that prove Chinese firms are just as capable of making high-quality kit as any from Europe or Japan.

Indeed it's to China that we should look for the next wave of lens makers, and already several more are showing signs of real ambition. Names to look out for include DJ-Optical with its 7artisans range, Kamlan, Meike, Yongnuo and Zhongyi (which has revived the old Mitakon brand). Yongnuo started out making cheap copies of old Canon and Nikon lenses, but has recently announced a slew of intriguing home-grown autofocus DSLR lenses. The others have mostly concentrated on making fully manual primes for mirrorless cameras: these make a perfect start point for lens manufacturers due to their mechanical simplicity, but are surely just a stepping stone to full automation and autofocus.

Going mainstream

As yet, none of these firms has yet gained much traction in the Western market. With no formal distribution network, right now they're only really an option to photographers prepared to have a punt on Amazon or eBay, and take a hit if the lens they receive turns out to be a dud. However I've tried quite a few of these optics now, and some are genuinely fine designs (see page 48 for more). But these companies will surely all be aiming to take the same path as Samyang, and work their way towards mass-market acceptance. It's anyone's guess as to which of them will be successful, but some will surely become regular additions to enthusiasts' kit bags within the next 10 years.

Andy Westlake is currently the Technical Editor of *Amateur Photographer*. For six and a half years he wrote for Digital Photography Review, writing numerous lens and camera reviews.



Names to look out for include Meike, with its full-frame 50mm f/1.7 lens for Sony E-mount

Do you have something you'd like to get off your chest? Send us your thoughts in around 500 words to the address on page 65 and win a year's digital subscription to AP, worth £79.99

In next week's issue

On sale Tuesday 24 July



Phone smarts

Maximise the potential of your smartphone to create stunning images



Sony RX100 VI

We dissect the technological marvel that is Sony's latest pocket travel zoom

Loupedeck+

Is this second-generation console an essential accessory for image editing?

Classy commissions

Our tips for boudoir photography, which is now more romantic than cheesy



Nikon D810, 16-35mm at 16mm, 1/100th second, f8, ISO800

LEE Landscape Polariser, 0.6 ND Soft Grad

Processing: Adobe Lightroom

SKOMER PUFFINS

As an outdoor photographer, I often look to include wildlife in their natural setting to complete the story. This can mean working with a wide angle lens to include both the sky and the landscape in the frame, making a set of LEE Filters an essential component of my kit bag.

Whilst watching the puffins on the Welsh island of Skomer, I realised there was an opportunity to capture something different to the usual frame filling portrait. Switching to a wide angle lens, I added a Landscape Polarising Filter to give the clouds some extra punch and clarity. With the sun low in the sky and just out of frame I also needed to balance the exposure using a 0.6ND soft graduated filter.

When processing the shot I was pleased to see a rich, detailed sky without any colour cast and that the soft transition of the filter had not resulted in the birds face becoming overly dark.

Matthew Cattell
matthewcattellphotography.com

LEE Filters

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Technique HANDHELD SHARPNESS

Stay sharp **ha**

Tripods ensure sharp shots but can slow you down and make spontaneous shots harder. **James Abbott** shows how to keep everything sharp handheld

For candid portraits, shoot handheld for maximum flexibility

KIT LIST



◀ Prime lens

Everyone needs a nifty fifty, not least because the wide aperture helps to keep ISO settings down in low light.



◀ Mini tripod

Pocket-sized mini tripods are a great way to add stability without the weight and bulk of a full-size tripod. [Such as the 3LT Iggy or Manfrotto PIXI]



ndheld



James Abbott



James is a landscape and portrait photographer based in Cambridge. He's also a freelance photography journalist and editor specialising in photography techniques, tutorials and reviews. If you can think of a subject, he's probably photographed it. See more of his work at www.jamesaphoto.co.uk.

Shooting handheld is all about speed, convenience, spontaneity and, in some situations, to be less conspicuous. The ability to react quickly should never be underestimated and is essential for some genres of photography including sports, portraiture, street, some wildlife, wedding photography and many more. Basically, in these situations if your camera is fixed to a tripod you'll be hugely restricted – a fleeting moment is lost forever if you are unable to respond to it.

The similarity here is that for standard shots of these subjects you'd generally use a shutter speed that's fast enough to freeze movement, unless you're panning a fast-moving subject or adding blur in-camera for creative effect. But even when freezing movement, it's quite common to use the slowest shutter speed you can get away with to try to keep ISO as low as possible for optimum image quality, and this is the source of many challenges alongside autofocus and the ability to change settings subconsciously on the fly.

The human tripod

Everyone wants to take the sharpest shots possible unless you're using a technique such as intentional camera movement. And with the correct settings and techniques, you can push your lenses to their limit and achieve sharpness in any situation. You've probably heard this before, but correct stance, hold and breathing are fundamental to taking sharp images. If you're shooting at the slowest shutter speed you can get away with, with or without image stabilisation, you need to keep the camera and lens as steady as possible. To do this stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and tuck your elbows into the front of your body. Breathe normally, but release the shutter immediately after exhaling. When using a telephoto lens with a tripod collar, ensure the tripod mount is rotated to the top of the lens. This will allow you to comfortably hold the bottom of the lens to keep it stable.

ALL PICTURES © JAMES ABBOTT, UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED

◀ Monopod

Combine a monopod with image stabilisation and you can shoot at shutter speeds as slow as 1sec.



◀ SteadePod

While not as effective as a monopod, this pocket-sized contraption will help you remain steady at standing height.

Technique HANDHELD SHARPNESS

Shooting in bursts

It's often said that less is more, but when it comes to shooting at the extremes of settings such as aperture and shutter speed, more means more chance of a pin-sharp image. So never be afraid of shooting more images than you might normally to increase the chances of one of those images being sharp exactly where you want it to be.

Shooting in continuous burst mode has a reputation for only being used for action photography where you can take a series of shots and pick out the one that looks best. When you're shooting with a wide aperture or slow shutter speed that's borderline too slow, set your camera to continuous burst mode. Shooting in a burst of, say, three shots gives you a much greater chance of one being sharp and in focus.

The sweet spot

The sharpness of lenses comes down to a number of factors, and quality of the lens and cost will always sit firmly at the top of that list. But regardless of whether you're shooting with a top-of-the-range pro option or the budget kit lens that came with your camera, all lenses share something in common and, that is, they all have a 'sweet spot'.

The sweet spot is simply the point at which the lens is able to produce the sharpest image possible. Not to be confused with depth of field, this is sharpest in the focus area of any given lens and in most cases is a middle aperture of $f/8$ or $f/11$. Some lenses, such as the 85mm $f/1.8$, are often optimised for shooting at wide apertures, and with solid focusing technique can produce unbelievably sharp results even at wide apertures, although the sweet spot remains a middle aperture.

How high can you really go?

There's no getting away from the fact that it's always best to shoot at the lowest ISO setting possible to keep noise to a minimum, but there will be times when you have to crank up the ISO to achieve either a shutter speed fast enough to support handholding, or one fast enough to freeze a moving subject.

Modern cameras are impressive performers when it comes to high ISO, and you can shoot relatively clean images up to ISO 1600. As a benchmark, up to ISO 3200 can still look fairly clean when processed well, and for extreme situations ISO 6400 is usable, but noise is more problematic.

Still, a sharp shot with a bit of noise is always better than a blurry image with no noise. One point worth noting is that the higher you go with ISO, the more the noise cuts into sharp subject edges and makes them appear less sharp.

OPTIMUM SHARPNESS IS ONLY A STEP AWAY

Ask most professionals whether you should upgrade your camera to the latest and greatest model available or whether you should buy new lenses, and many will tell you to invest in the best glass possible because that will improve the quality of your images more than a new camera with a slightly better sensor. Lenses are unbelievably important because they're the element of gear that creates the image on the camera sensor, so having the best lenses available for shooting your favourite

subjects will always give you a head start.

There comes a time in every photographer's life where you want to take your images to the next level, but you're not quite sure how to go about it. Most of the time, it all comes down to just a few simple changes to your technique here and there, and you'll see dramatic improvements in your photography.

So here are six tips that will help you to get the most from your lenses, and ultimately take sharper shots.



The correct posture, the way you hold the camera, and breathing all contribute to stability



1 Focusing macro handheld

Focusing is all about either pressing the shutter button to initiate autofocus, or manually turning the focus ring on the lens to bring the image into focus. While both of these points are true for macro photography there's also another way, and that's the rocking technique. When shooting at a 1:1 ratio the lens will be manually set to its minimum focusing distance, so to focus you have to gently move the camera backwards and forwards to bring the subject into focus – a bit like using a focusing plate with a tripod.



2 Auto ISO for sharper shots

An essential setting for shooting handheld, auto ISO is a great way to ensure shutter speed is fast enough to avoid camera shake, even if you're moving between indoors and outdoors. Auto ISO is a feature where the camera selects the most appropriate setting within a range set by you. All you have to do is set the ideal or lowest setting; the highest you'd like it to go to, for example, ISO 3200; and the minimum shutter speed that should be set.



3 Successful AF in all situations

Generally speaking, having a single AF point active offers the best blend of convenience and control because you choose the point of focus. If shooting a static subject set the AF mode to single shot: so, once the shutter button is depressed halfway, focus will lock onto the subject behind the active focus point and remain locked until released. For moving subjects, use continuous AF – the camera will continually focus on a moving subject while the shutter button is depressed halfway.



4 Fast prime lenses for low light

When it comes to shooting street or portrait photography in low light, or indeed in any light, fast prime lenses are the perfect way to keep ISO settings as low as possible while using differential focus to highlight the subject. When shooting in low light, the ability to shoot at f/1.8 rather than the kit lens average of f/5.6 when set to 50mm is a difference of two stops. In practical terms, that's the difference between shooting at ISO 1600 rather than ISO 6400.



5 Image stabilisation

Image stabilisation allows you to shoot at slower shutter speeds than you would normally be able to without it. If your lens offers it, type 1 is for general subjects and type 2 is for panning. Lenses with just an on/off switch only have type 1. When shooting with your camera on a tripod it's imperative that you switch off image stabilisation. If left on, the IS detects its own tiny movements, even though the camera is completely still, and moves even more to compensate which results in blurring.



6 The focal length/shutter speed rule

You've probably heard of this rule of thumb, but it does provide a good starting point for shutter speed and lenses so it doesn't hurt to cover it again. It's said that the shutter speed you shoot with should match or exceed the focal length of your lens to avoid camera shake. So, if you're shooting at 50mm you'd need 1/60sec minimum, and at 200mm you'd need 1/250sec minimum. It's a crude rule but works well as a guide when you're shooting with or without image stabilisation.



7 Panning fast-moving subjects

Panning is a great way to add dynamism to action shots. Hold your camera and stand in the way we suggest on page 13 and set the AF mode to continuous. Use shutter priority and set an appropriate speed for the subject. Next, track the subject with the active AF point as it passes you with the shutter button depressed halfway. Release the shutter and continue to smoothly track the subject. In this panned shot (far left) the subject is sharp; the other is not.

Technique HANDHELD SHARPNESS

Subjects that are best shot handheld

Street and reportage

When you're out shooting on the street the last thing you want to do is draw attention to yourself when taking clandestine photos of strangers. Not only would a tripod be too static, it would also stick out like a sore thumb. One trick some street photographers use is to have their camera on a strap around their neck and



shoot blind, while others quickly raise the camera to their eye to compose and shoot in one smooth, split-second motion. If, when using this technique you do get 'caught' by the person, looking thoughtfully beyond or above them and taking another shot will, most often, make them think you're actually focused on something else.

The use of image stabilisation was essential for this street panning shot 1/8sec at f/11, ISO 800

Portraiture

When you're shooting portraits, the subject may not be moving around a great deal, but having your camera attached to a tripod will slow down and restrict your shooting. It's always better to shoot handheld because this will allow you to move forwards, backwards and to the sides to create new compositions and crops, as well as allow you to shoot with the camera at different angles.

If you're worried about shots being level, most cameras have some kind of virtual horizon that's visible in the viewfinder. DSLRs often use the exposure scale at the bottom, while mirrorless cameras are able to display a full virtual horizon in their EVF.

Frame and compose portraits with speed and ease handheld



Sports and action

The ability to respond to fast-moving subjects with speed and ease means shooting handheld is often the best way to work when shooting action. However, if shooting for long periods of time with a large and heavy telephoto lens, a monopod or gimbal tripod head offers flexibility and support. These are great and sometimes a necessity, but still more restrictive than

handholding the camera. If you're shooting with a more compact telephoto, such as a 70-200mm, 70-300mm or 300mm prime, these lenses are light enough to shoot handheld for long periods so you shouldn't have any problems. Another option is to place a beanbag on a wall, fence or barrier and rest the lens on this.

Shooting handheld allows you to respond more quickly and not miss the action



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Photo by Elaine Li

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For the love of dogs

The results for The Kennel Club **Dog Photographer of the Year 2018** have been announced. Here are a few of our favourites

Now in its 13th year, The Kennel Club's prestigious Dog Photographer of the Year competition is more popular than ever, receiving more than 10,000 entries from over 70 different countries. With 10 categories to enter, the judges saw a wide range of images, from Corgis to cross breeds; running dogs to sleeping dogs; assistance dogs and rescue dogs; dogs hard at work to dogs simply having fun; and, of course,

everyone's favourite, adorable puppies and gorgeous oldies. AP's Technique Editor and esteemed spaniel owner, Hollie Latham Hucker, was thrilled to be part of the judging panel for this year's competition. She says, 'I love dogs and, being a dog owner, I spend countless hours photographing my spaniel, Bella. I know just how challenging it can be so I thought I'd ask some of this year's winners to share some of their top tips for capturing successful canine portraits.'

The Lady of the Mystery Forest Monica van der Maden, The Netherlands

1st place - Overall Winner
and Oldies category

'This is Noa, a Great Dane. I wanted to photograph her in a position where she was sitting relaxed next to a tree. When I wanted to take the shot she turned her head to the left towards her owner and this was the moment where you could see her soul.'

MONICA'S TOP TIPS

1 My go-to lens is the Nikon 200mm f/2, as it's fantastic for low-light shooting and is super-sharp.

2 It is important that your subject is relaxed, so don't rush the shoot. Get down low to capture beautiful bokeh blur in the front and back of the scene.

© MONICA VAN DER MADEN

Robyn uses bold colours, dynamic angles and avant-garde lighting to capture each dog's larger-than-life personality
Canon EOS 5D Mark IV,
12-24mm, 1/500sec at
f/5.6, ISO 250



© ROBYN POPE

Roly Poly Puppy Robyn Pope, USA

3rd place -
Puppies category

'This is Snickers, a cross-breed puppy I photographed for Doodle Rock Rescue. I knew the moment Snickers began rolling around on the blanket that I had to embody his zest for life in a photo that would help him find the perfect playful home.'

ROBYN'S TOP TIPS

1 An ultra-wideangle lens enabled me to get close to Snickers and interact with him.

2 A wide angle of view exaggerates the personalities and features of your subject for a unique perspective.

Monica captured Noa in the forest early one morning for a quiet and mysterious portrait
Nikon D850, 200mm, 1/320sec
at f/2, ISO 1600



Reassurance

Dean Mortimer, UK

1st place - Assistance
Dogs Charity category

▶ 'The ex-soldier in this photo suffers from PTSD so that's when Rocko came to his rescue. In my photograph I tried to capture not just how this dog aids this PTSD sufferer, but also the kind nature of the dog and how he enriches this man's life.'

DEAN'S TOP TIPS

1 A telephoto lens like Canon's EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS USM II will enable you to stand back from your subjects so they feel relaxed.

2 A fast lens is important for letting plenty of light in and producing lovely background blur.

Dean has captured the bond between the ex-soldier and Rocko beautifully
Canon EOS-1D X,
70-200mm, 1/160sec
at f/2.8, ISO 2000



Technique DOG POTY 2018



Carol took this during the autumn of 2016, when the colours were at their peak
Apple iPhone 6s, 4.15mm,
1/190sec at f/2.2, ISO 25

© CAROL DURRANT

Glenturret Autumn Gold

Carol Durrant, UK

1st place - Portrait category

◀ 'On the day there was a mist in the background, giving the photo a magical feel. It was taken at Ash Rangers where Crew, Darcie and Pagan walk daily. This photo is memorable because Crew's life was cut short at 3 with IBD disease.'

CAROL'S TOP TIPS

1 Hold your phone close to your body for support and get down to the dog's eye level for a more intimate portrait.

2 Unless you have well-trained dogs, take treats to bribe your subjects.

Wayne's Team

Tracy Kidd, UK

1st place - Dogs at Work category

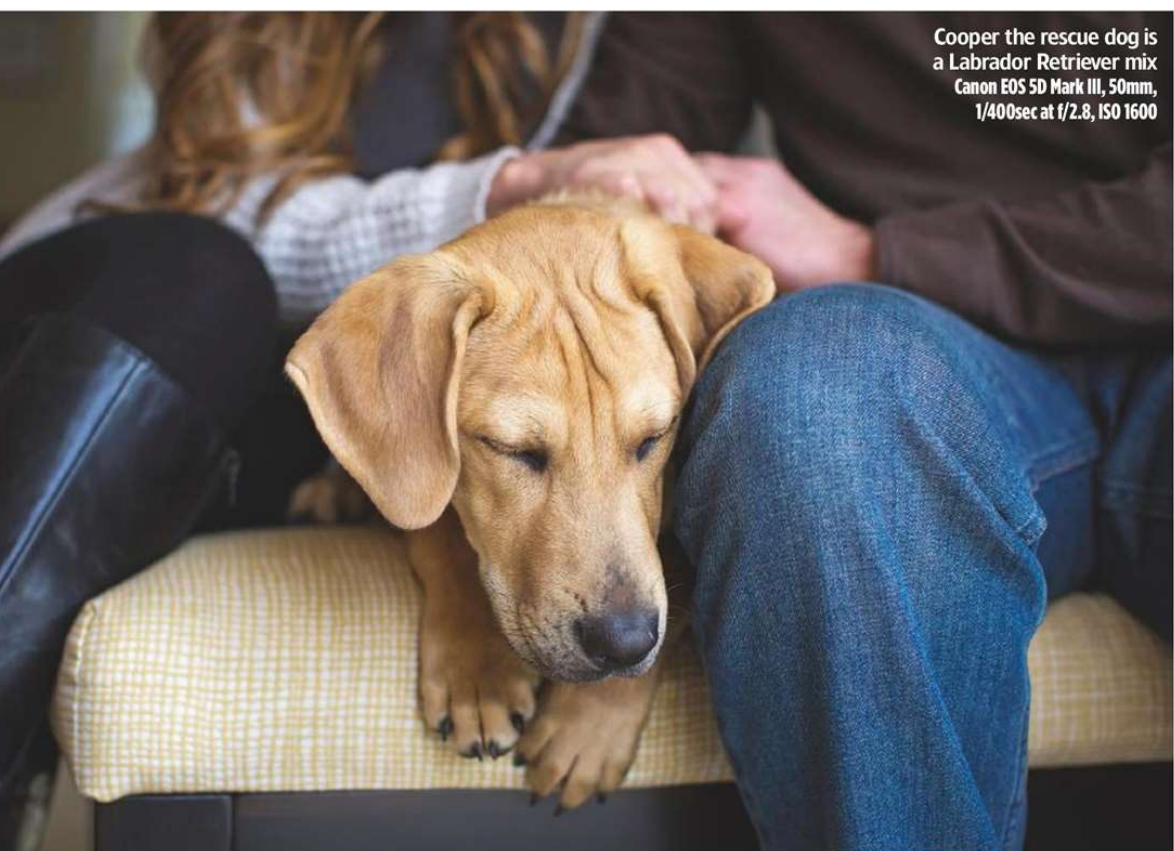
▶ 'I was in photographer's heaven while out on the shoot with Wayne's Team of working dogs. It was a privilege to watch them, tails held high, nose to the ground and retrieving.'

TRACY'S TOP TIPS

1 Choose a lens that offers flexibility, such as a 70-200mm. The option of working unobtrusively at 200mm, yet close enough at 70mm for portraiture, gives me fantastic flexibility in the field.

2 Use exposure compensation to handle a variety of light conditions.

© TRACY KIDD



Cooper the rescue dog is a Labrador Retriever mix
Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 50mm,
1/400sec at f/2.8, ISO 1600

© SONYA KOLB

Found My Way Home

Sonya Kolb, USA

1st place - Rescue Dogs Charity category

◀ 'It was very clear that Cooper is the first "child" for this beautiful and loving couple. In this shot, they are holding hands behind Cooper's drowsing head. It was a scene of pure contentment and love.'

SONYA'S TOP TIPS

1 My fast 50mm lens ensures I maintain a fast shutter speed in low-light conditions. It also allows me to get close to my subject and fill the frame.

2 Don't get caught up in the technicalities. Preserving the moments that reveal themselves is more important than getting the perfect settings.

From left to right: Skye (back), Jenny (front), Pippin, Milly, Bramble, Ember and Bonnie
Nikon D850, 70-200mm, 1/160sec at f/4.5, ISO 1250



Flying Free

Steffi Cousins, UK

2nd place - Dogs at Play category

'This is Heidi, my bonkers Chihuahua. She goes crazy at the beach; she absolutely loves

life and it clearly shows! I had my back to her photographing other dogs in the water and when I turned to check on her, I managed to grab this shot just in time. I'm so glad I did, it's my favourite photo of Heidi and it shows off her crazy energy perfectly!

STEFFI'S TOP TIPS

- 1 Set a high shutter speed – mine is never below 1/1000sec, even for portraits.
- 2 Don't compose too tightly and risk missing the action; it's easier to crop later.



Steffi took this image at West Wittering beach during a dog meet up
Canon EOS 7D Mark II, 70-300mm, 1/1000sec at f/5.6, ISO 200

Capture modern engineering

Let's banish the outdated engineering stereotypes of hard hats and greasy pipes

From space exploration and autonomous vehicles, to advancements in healthcare and sustainable energy – engineers are inventing new ways to do things and finding solutions that will make this world a better place.

The opportunities are endless and the industry is always evolving, but there is a severe lack of understanding about what engineering and technology truly entails among the general public, especially for young girls.

Research behind the Institution of Engineering and Technology's (IET) Engineer a Better World campaign shows that fewer than half the number of parents of girls would encourage their children to consider a career in engineering, compared to two-thirds of the parents of boys. Most parents, particularly those with daughters, are unaware of how many different types of engineering jobs there are – and that these jobs can be very creative, interesting and varied.

And statistics from the most recent IET Skills and Demand in Industry survey shows that only one in 10 (11%) of the UK engineering and technical workforce is female – so recognising and showcasing outstanding engineering has never been so important.

Updating the image of engineering to show its breadth and diversity through the use of more

appealing and engaging photography, will help portray a truer reflection of modern engineering, and hopefully inspire the next generation to consider careers in this innovative sector.

Competition

The IET Engineering & Technology Photographer of the Year 2018 is open to any photograph of an engineering-related subject that captures the dynamic, creative and progressive face of engineering and engineers today.

Along with *The Gadget Show* host Georgie Barrat, the judging panel also includes Nigel Atherton, Editor of *Amateur Photographer*, Gillian Abbott, Picture Editor at *E&T magazine* and IET Young Woman Engineer of the Year Dr Ozak Esu.

Ozak is an electrical engineer at Cundall and STEM ambassador, passionate about inspiring the next generation of engineers, especially girls. She says: 'Engineering is exciting and fast-changing – shaping the world around us and improving the quality of our everyday lives. And yet the traditional images of engineering and engineers have focused on one area of hard hats and dirty overalls, which is an outdated image that the IET is committed to change.'

'We want to banish the perception that engineers just fix or mend things. By making this call for creative and stand-out images, we

hope that we can help to highlight the modern, exciting and creative nature of an engineer's work and demonstrate that their work is central to our everyday lives.'

To enter, all you need to do is take photographs of engineering-related subjects that truly capture the innovative, imaginative and fast-developing face of engineering and engineers today. Winning photographs will help to challenge public misconceptions of engineering and demonstrate the ingenuity, breadth and vibrancy of its world. For full details, visit www.theiet.org/photo-competition.

Above: This image, taken by Santiago Villamediana Sanchez, of a researcher working in a chamber that simulates the environment of space, won the Design and Production category last year

SUBMIT YOUR PHOTOS

To enter, please send your images by **23:59 (BST) on Friday, 28 September 2018**, to photography@theiet.org along with a completed entry form, available to download from www.theiet.org/photo-competition. The competition is open internationally, subject to local laws, and is split into two age categories: youth (16 and under) and adult (over 16). Anyone who meets the age criteria is able to enter, and entering is completely free of charge.





Categories and prizes

The competition is open to everyone across two age groups. You can enter up to five photos across any of the following categories:

Design and Production

This category celebrates innovation around the design, development and making of all the things that people need. Images might include mechanical, materials and manufacturing.

Digital

In this category, you can include photography around robotics and electronic tools, as well as systems, devices and resources that generate, store or process data.

Environment and Energy

This category focuses on engineering and technology within our environment, as well as energy efficiency, energy services, facility management and alternative energy technologies.

Structure

This category includes construction, architecture, buildings, bridges, and cityscapes.

Transport

Images of all forms of transportation are included in this category.

Best Smartphone Photo

A new category in the competition. The judges will be looking for the best photograph taken on a smartphone across all of the categories!

The judges will look at every entry and award £500 to each of the five adult category winners and £150 to each of the five youth category winners. An overall winner across all categories and age groups will then be awarded an extra £250. The winner of the Best Smartphone Photo will win £150. On top of the cash prizes, a selection of the winning images will be displayed in a photographic exhibition in central London and will feature in *Amateur Photographer* later this year.

Winning photos

The competition ran for the first time last year, with some amazing photography from a broad range of engineering and technology areas. Santiago Villamediana Sanchez, from Madrid, won the Design and Production category for his image that showed a researcher working in a thermal vacuum chamber that simulates the environment of space. It's used for the design and production of micro-satellites and other space equipment.

Vadim Melnicuk, from Warwick, was named winner of the Digital category for his photo that features the BxD Simulator for Intelligent Vehicles at WMG, University of Warwick. The driving simulator removes much of the risk associated with testing autonomous cars by replicating complex driving scenarios, different environmental conditions and unexpected events in a safe and repeatable environment.

Highly commended, Rob Yorke from Kent used his iPhone 7's LIVE function to capture sunrise over the Dudgeon substation, some 20 miles out to sea, north of Cromer, Norfolk. It is connected via undersea cables to the 67 wind-turbine generators of the Dudgeon Offshore Wind Farm.



Vadim Melnicuk's image was a 2017 category winner



Rob Yorke's image of an offshore substation



Enter by 28 September 2018 at www.theiet.org/photo-competition #IETPhotoComp

Inbox

Email ap@ti-media.com and include your full postal address.

Write to Inbox, Amateur Photographer, TI Media Limited, Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough, Hants GU14 7BF

LETTER OF THE WEEK



A new film launch – the Reflex SLR

The Reflex is a lonely child

David Healey's *Viewpoint* (AP 7 July) about the Kickstarter-funded Reflex film SLR was intriguing. The camera's specifications – a modular interchangeable lens mount and interchangeable backs – make for interesting reading. But other than curiosity value will such a camera be a hit with film fans who can already buy once highly desired SLRs for a song on eBay? The photo in the article showed five classic film cameras, one of which was a Pentax Spotmatic. I've owned a Spotmatic 1000 for 40 years, and it's still going strong. And when I scan the film shot in it I get superb results and beautiful neutral mono prints from my Canon Pixma Pro-10 printer. It's my way of combining old technology with the new. Many film fans still use the traditional wet darkroom approach while others prefer the sheer beauty afforded by colour slide film.

Either way, the upcoming (rather unimaginatively titled) Reflex SLR is hardly likely to inspire major camera manufacturers into reintroducing film cameras. With the popularity of DSLRs and the ever-expanding mirrorless camera market, bringing in a new film camera would seem like a huge step backwards. David Healey says the camera might fulfil the need for a relatively affordable film SLR. There are thousands, if not millions, of them out there already.

Stevie Smith

You make some interesting points, and it is indeed a very competitive market. I suppose the counterargument against snaffling old film cameras on eBay is that not everyone wants to take a chance on used gear. DSLRs and mirrorless cameras are well established, but there is a steady cohort of photographers who want to take the road less travelled and shoot with film. Anyway, we wish the Reflex SLR every success. It will be interesting to see how well it sells – **Nigel Atherton, editor**

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Andrew Herbert uses Photoshop Elements for editing his images

Elementary, my dear AP

With all the regular articles and workshops on photo-editing in Photoshop, please don't forget that there are elementary Photoshop users as well, let alone all the users of other off-piste software. Perhaps you could include an addendum to such articles about options, if any, for achieving the demonstrated effects in Photoshop Elements? I guess you may have some data on what proportion of your readership this might involve?

Andrew Herbert

Thanks for this. We'd love to hear how many other readers are still using Photoshop Elements in this era of Creative Cloud. It's difficult to please everyone as space is limited in the magazine, but we do run regular round-ups of alternative editing software – **Geoff Harris, deputy editor**

Aw shucks

What a delightful surprise to win Letter of the Week in AP 30 June. I'm not often moved to write a letter to a magazine (and I read several), but I never cease to be impressed by the level of expertise, passion and dedication that goes into producing *Amateur Photographer* on a weekly basis. It really is head and shoulders above anything else I read, and you have to do it every week! So well done to you all.

As for the prize of a memory card, I don't really need it – I have more than I need. So perhaps you could ask the Editor to give it to someone more needy. Perhaps a young person just starting out?

Neil Northgate

I didn't realise my letter was Letter of the Week (AP 16 June) and I just wanted to say it's made my day, if not my week. To see my Dad in print, would have been something that would have really pleased him, and I am ecstatic, to say the least. I miss my Dad and I do treasure the photographs. He bought me my first camera many years ago and that's what probably started my interest in photography.

Jane Boswell

Thanks for all the kind words! – **Nigel Atherton, editor**

Not alternative enough?

In your reply to the letter 'Feeling Affinity' (Inbox, AP 2 June) you ask whether AP is too Adobe-centric. In my opinion – yes. No doubt the rebuttal would be that 'it is the industry standard and/or it's the software the professionals use' which are the same arguments when camera bodies/lenses/tripods, etc. are discussed. The net result of that approach is that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy if no one is aware that there are serious alternatives and that is where I feel AP is letting its readers down across the entire spectrum – from camera bodies to filters, other accessories and software. It is very apparent in many of the articles, where the same names occur with regularity; and even in illustrative photos, one can rely on the same brand names appearing. Too often the focus is on the top of the range, and total cost of ownership is an aspect which doesn't seem to be a consideration when discussing any item of equipment or process. If AP is to be a real resource for the amateur photographer and maintain a healthy subscription level, it really needs to open people's eyes to alternatives rather than just trot out the same old recommendations.

Steve Bastiman

Do other readers agree? We're not sure what you mean by 'serious alternatives' when it comes to camera bodies, lenses and accessories, as we review gear from all the major makers, at all price points. Our testing team reviews entry-level cameras with the same commitment that they review more expensive equipment, as we have a wide range of skill and experience levels among

our readership. Prices have indeed risen, but that's to do with wider economic forces and political developments, and it tends to be the case that you get what you pay for in photography, as in other areas of life. We do try to strike the right balance, and if you look on page 48 of this issue, for example, you'll find lots of very affordable creative lenses from less well-known names – **Andy Westlake**, technical editor

A man with big hands writes

Andrew Redding (*Inbox*, AP 30 June) and many manufacturers seem to think that all cameras must get smaller and smaller. Mr Redding suffers from back problems and cannot imagine other people's reasons for wanting a larger camera, which he disparagingly calls 'macho'. I have big hands which are in proportion to my body, so I find the modern mini cameras uncomfortable and hard to use. However once I put a battery grip on my Nikons D300 or D700, they fit like a glove. I also find that a lot of photographers don't adjust the contents of their bag to suit the project of the day, but lug equipment they probably have not used for months. I have to say my 74 years and 6ft 2in frame has had no problems with a large camera and a couple of lenses. Each to his own.

Mike Durrans

I too have bear hands, and also find that the controls on some mirrorless cameras require the dexterity of a furniture maker for doll's houses. That said, my back and shoulders have been known to complain loudly after lugging around a Nikon D750 and 24-70mm lens all day

Smaller mirrorless cameras are not for everyone when it comes to handling



(hardly a particularly ambitious set-up), so both sides of the argument have merits. And it's great that there is now an unprecedented choice of camera types, from smartphones to large-format behemoths. Cultural differences play a role here too; we understand that Olympus is a bestseller in Japan as the locals particularly prize their 'smaller' mirrorless cameras and dainty but sharp lenses – **Geoff Harris**, deputy editor

Jacques of all trades

What's this? Jacques Henri Lartigue only discovered photography aged 69 ('Back In The Day', *7Days*, AP 7 July)? One of his most famous pictures, 'Grand Prix of the Automobile Club of France, Course at Dieppe', was taken in 1912, when he was about 18 years old.

David Travis

Hands up to this one – we meant to say a lot of his early photographs were only discovered when he was in his late 60s, as he had made his name as a painter – **Geoff Harris**, deputy editor

Talking shop

I wanted to buy a Canon 85mm f/1.8 lens so I rang a well-known High Street store that was in the local shopping mall and was told 'we don't stock it, but we can order it and have it in by Tuesday'. I politely declined and looked on Amazon, who if I ordered by 5pm, could deliver it next day ie Sunday. The item arrived the next day, and was £20 or so cheaper as well.

Andrew S Redding

You have to sympathise with stores trying to compete against the likes of Amazon and nobody can blame you for wanting to save £20. That said, a lot of retailers now have competitive prices and they

can offer specialist and friendly advice to less confident customers or those seeking a more in-depth discussion – you are very unlikely to get this from Amazon – **Geoff Harris**, deputy editor

APOY 2018

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Round Five

Persons of Interest

For this round we are looking for images of people, whether that be in the form of a portrait, street scene, or carefully considered selfie. There are a number of things to consider, such as ensuring that the correct focus is achieved and that your images are free of background details that might detract from your subject.

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Lea of the land

Landscape photographer **Lea Tippet** talks about his love of the outdoors and why he uses **Sigma** cameras and lenses

Being Cornish born and bred, perhaps rugged coasts and deserted moors are in Lea Tippet's blood, but his initial interest in photography was inspired by the birth of his daughter in 2004. He soon realised that his talent was not in photographing people but landscapes. An electrical engineer by trade, his shift-based working hours provide him with plenty of opportunity to escape civilisation and practise his passion.

What is it about landscapes that appeals to you?

I think it's about getting out there – the solitude and being away from man-made things. You're out there with the hills, or the coastline, and it's just you and the elements.

Do you specialise in any particular area of the UK?

I'm based in South West England, so I'm quite lucky – I can be in

Dartmoor in an hour. I also spend lots of time on Cornwall's north and west coasts (probably one of my favourite locations). But I have a love affair with Porth Nanven in west Cornwall. I've gone there so many times, I've lost count now. I was really inspired by Andrew Nadolksi who wrote a book called *The End of the Land*, which is purely landscape photography and pictures of Porth Nanven.

What research and preparation do you do ahead of a shoot?

I research locations quite rigorously actually, looking for the best places to shoot. I'm a bit of a fan of apps on the phone. The Photographer's Ephemeris is probably the one I use the most, for searching new places and finding the right time of the year to shoot, with the sun being in the right position and so on. I also use Sun Scout, plus weather apps and Google Maps.



ALL PICTURES © LEA TIPPETT

Above: Blackchurch Rock, North Devon. Mouthmill Beach has amazing layers of rock formations jutting out of the ground. I positioned the rock centrally, using the sea and headland to lead your eyes towards it Sigma sd Quattro H, 1sec at f/11, ISO 100

Left: Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset. The sunset was spectacular and I wanted to capture the sky's reflection. The curvature from the water and sand draws your eyes to the lighthouse Sigma sd Quattro H, 0.5sec at f/11, ISO 100

If it's a morning shoot I sometimes go the night before. I have a small van that I sleep in – my wife thinks I'm mad. When I'm out, it's usually for days at a time; it's non-stop. My wife is very understanding. Photography started as a hobby, then became a passion, and now it's a way of life really. For instance, last week I went down to Devon to shoot the sunset. But afterwards I packed the van back up, put my equipment away and headed off to Dartmoor. I got there at 1am, slept for a few hours in the van, and then woke early to photograph the sunrise.

So what's in your camera bag right now?

At the moment, my main workhorse is the Sigma sd Quattro H, which is Sigma's flagship mirrorless camera. I use three lenses with it. My 12-24mm f/4 Art lens is on the



SIGMA



camera 99% of the time. It has wonderful image quality, especially if you go down to 12mm. It's very sharp, even in the corners. I love the contrast from the lens as well – there's basically no chromatic aberration; it's really, really nice. It even feels great in the hand. I also have the new Sigma 24-70mm f/2.8 Art lens, which I find is a very good general-purpose lens. Again, it has great build quality, and it has image stabilisation, although I don't use this feature that much as I use a tripod for most of my work. I recently added the 14mm f/1.8 lens to my kit, which is stunning. It's probably the sharpest lens of all.

So why do you use this camera? It's quite quirky.

You hit the nail on the head there. It's not everyone's cup of tea but I've loved it from day one. I worked on

the Sigma stand at The Photography Show, and lots of people came up to look at the cameras, since they look quite unconventional. And they were really shocked.

I started using Sigma because I'm a bit of a techie at heart and was intrigued by the Foveon X3 sensor. I was impressed with the images I saw online so I bought a Sigma SD9, and since then I've had most of the cameras that Sigma has produced. I use the sd Quattro H because of the build quality, user-friendly interface, and the sensor, which is unique. Yes, there are a couple of issues: the sensor struggles somewhat with higher ISOs, so it's not ideal for sports photography, for instance. And the battery life could be improved. But these things are slowly being smoothed out by the team at Sigma. Used the way I use it – for landscapes, at low ISOs on a

Lea recommends always using a tripod for landscapes



tripod, with long exposures – image quality is outstanding, especially if you use the Sigma Photo Pro software for processing the files. The sensor registers detail very well, and the rendering and tonal range of the images are really striking.

What other accessories do you use?

I use NiSi Filters – mostly neutral densities and ND grads – and an FLM tripod, which is extremely well built. FLM is a German company that has been around for a while. It makes ball heads as well which are to die for. I actually prefer ball heads; they're easier for travel too.

What are your long-term plans?

My long-term goal is to become a full-time landscape photographer. It's a long road, and it's not going to happen overnight, but that's what I'm aiming for. I do run the occasional workshop, which I'm trying to build up.



Lea Tippet is a landscape photographer based in the South West of England and has over 15 years of experience photographing around the UK. He runs workshops and one-to-one tuition primarily in the South West. He is also a brand ambassador for Sigma Imaging UK and NiSi Filters. For more information, visit www.leatippet.com.

Lea's tips for aspiring landscape photographers

Scout locations first

If you're shooting a seascape for instance, be sure to check out the tide times and positioning of the sunsets, and so on. Personally I like shooting when the tide is out, and it's safer as well, so I like to know what time this will happen.

Arrive early

Maybe even get there the day before. Have a bit of a look around. Too many of us turn up half an hour before sunset, in such a rush that we don't realise there are better places to shoot from. Preparation is key.

Always use a tripod

You read it in magazines every week, but it's true. With landscapes, you need to get used to how to compose an image. With a tripod it's so much easier.

Don't always shoot 3:2

Recently I've shot a lot in square format, and I really like it. Just experiment and play around with different formats and aspect ratios.

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Technique TILT-SHIFT PHOTOGRAPHY



Upward shift has given perfectly corrected verticals in this image of Millennium Park, Chicago
 Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, TS-E 17mm
 f/4L, 1/15sec at f/11, ISO 100

KIT LIST



◀ Spirit bubbles everywhere

When shifting the camera, perfect alignment is essential – you can't have too many spirit levels! Cameras have highly accurate inbuilt electronic levels, but some prosumer cameras don't have the all-important rise and fall.



◀ Levelling base

If you really get the bug, a levelling base is the key to a fast-track set-up. Unlock one handle and rotate your entire tripod head in one movement, without the headache of aligning the tripod legs. It's essential kit for interior photographers in particular.



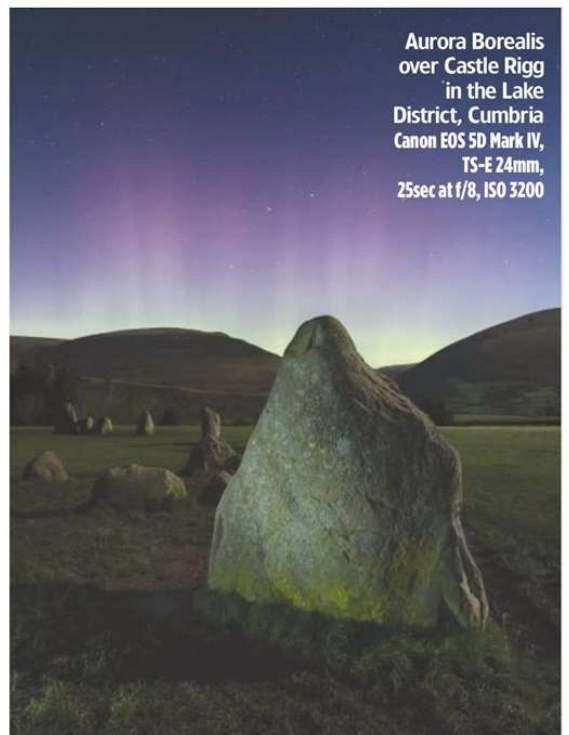
Straighten Up

Master the art of tilt-shift photography and using these magical optics to correct your images or create miniature worlds – **David Clapp** reveals all you need to know

If there is one lens to purchase that announces your accomplishment as master of technical photography, it's the tilt-and-shift lens. Many photographers beginning their journey into photography behold these incredible optics with both a sense of fear and wonder. It is mathematical indeed – movements, scales and all those extra knobs. Compelling and daunting, these lenses have exemplary build quality and all have to be manufactured with military precision. Some, like the 17mm Canon (nicknamed 'the crystal ball' with its orb-like front element) are so beautiful and so captivating to gaze upon, that it is easy to fall hopelessly under its spell. Yet, more often than not, the romance can be fleeting, confusing and only lead to heartache.



Aurora Borealis
over Castle Rigg
in the Lake
District, Cumbria
Canon EOS 5D Mark IV,
TS-E 24mm,
25sec at f/8, ISO 3200



David Clapp

A self-confessed tilt-and-shift addict, David Clapp is a technical specialist whose constant experimentation with optics has secured regular representation by leading tilt-shift lens manufacturing company Canon. A photographic lecturer on all things complicated, David uses its TS-E lenses to shoot everything from superyacht commissions to radio telescope stations. Visit www.davidclapp.co.uk.

Technique TILT-SHIFT PHOTOGRAPHY

Think of a tilt-and-shift like a pocket-sized large format camera. It is here where its origins lie. Way back when cameras were carried on donkeys and made of wood and steel, every lens was a tilt-and-shift lens. With the benefits of a huge image circle significantly larger than the 5x4in capture area, the lens could be shifted up, down, and even left and right to 'correct' the picture. The lens could also be tilted (up and down) or swung (left and right) to angle the focal plane along the subject. When you consider that a 90mm lens is a 'wideangle' on a large format camera, these tilt movements are essential to assist the drawbacks of a reduced depth of field, by angling the focal plane along the subject. It's known as the Scheimpflug principle. However, now is not a time to 'wing it without the manual', but by conquering its complexities you open a doorway of possibilities.

Available optics

The market leader is Canon with a total of five exceptional optics: 17mm f/4, 24mm f/3.5, 50mm f/2.8, 90mm f/2.8 and 135mm f/4. They are expensive, with prices ranging from £1,800 to £2,200 at the time of writing, but they have myriad uses. The wideangles (17mm and 24mm) are primarily architecture, interior and landscape lenses, with the overlapping 50mm opening the doorway to macro photography. The focal plane can be angled along the subject at wide apertures to get all those dreamy flower heads in focus. The 90mm and 135mm lenses take this concept into product

photography such as jewellery and medical photography and dentistry.

All tilt-shift newbies find shifting a straightforward concept. Set the camera level and shift the lens upwards to correct what would be converging verticals. You can place the camera in landscape or portrait mode and shift the composition to avoid leaning tower blocks. It's unbelievably addictive.

Now when it comes to tilt, here's where everything goes wobbly. With just 7° to play with, it initially seems a little pathetic, until you realise that at 7° the focal plane is lying along the floor. That's right, the focal plane has literally rotated 90°, but the mind bending doesn't stop there. The depth of field has now become wedge shaped and your focusing ring raises and lowers the focal plane – it's literally levitating! Read all about the Scheimpflug principle and take your time. Tilt is a tricky beast to conquer.

It's a small world

You can also intentionally tilt the lens to create miniaturising effects. Pick a high viewpoint and tilt the lens upwards to throw the focal plane out and shrink the world around you. The effect mimics a macro lens, but with real-world subjects like cars and people, the concept can be hilarious.

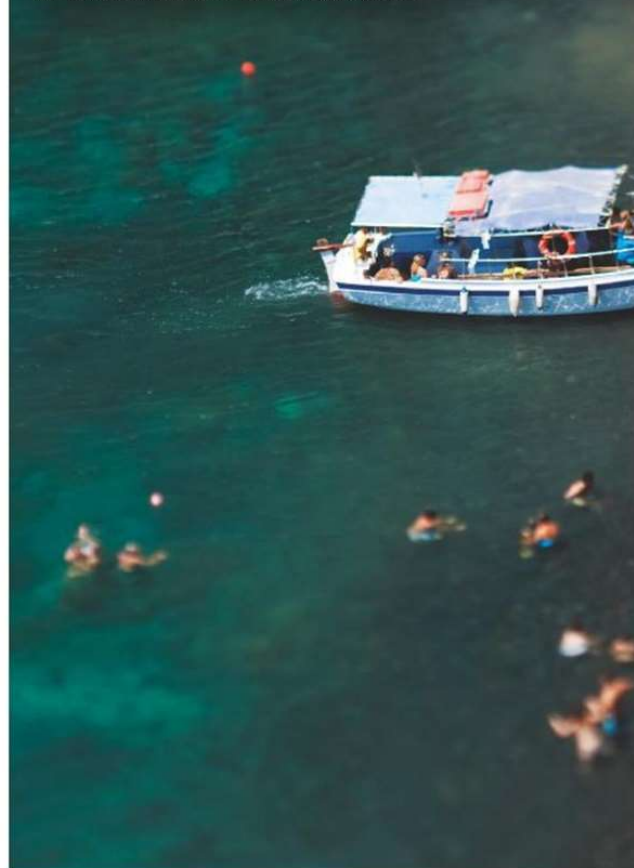
Is this a beginner lens? Absolutely not, but with some perseverance (and reading) the results can be incredible. From a perfectly aligned world, to impossible depth-of-field effects, the tilt-and-shift lens could be calling you to a world of technically corrected fun.

AP

Why it works

Taken from a cliff top in Santorini, Greece, the miniaturising can be seen in full effect. It's all about the viewpoint. It's absolutely essential to be as close to 45° to the subject as possible, because this is the angle from which we examine the world close up. Tilting the lens upwards makes the picture lose focus at the top and bottom, simulating the close-focus effect of a macro lens. When working with people, interaction is absolutely key to add a narrative to the photograph. The lens used here was a 90mm tilted by 5°, the aperture at f/5.6.

Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III, 90mm, 1/200sec at f/5.6, ISO 200



DAVID CLAPP'S TOP TIPS

Align the camera's shift

1 In this unshifted but positioned example, the verticals are converging. This is a common problem seen when shooting architecture without a tilt-and-shift lens. The distortion, although subtle, causes the building to taper inwards at the top, which is not what your eyes experience.



2 Set up the camera using the inbuilt level, with the pitch and yaw zeroed. As can be seen in this picture, the verticals are perfectly straight, but the top of the building has now been cut off. This is a good situation to use the power of the shift to reposition the image circle. It will help us capture the entire building into the picture.



3 The lens has now been shifted upwards by 5mm. This is enough to position a comfortable gap at the top of the image, and so the shift composition looks roughly the same as the composition in Tip 1 (see left), but with the verticals now corrected. There are no more converging verticals in this picture.



Hire a tilt-and-shift lens

It goes without saying that specialist optics do not come cheap, and for such niche requirements not many people can justify splashing out on a tilt-and-shift lens. However, there are a number of places where you can hire a tilt-and-shift lens, just like any other camera gear, for as little as £25-£30 a day. See our special feature *Hire a lens* (pages 42-47) for information on lens hire companies and how to go about the process of hiring a lens.



Aligning tilt

1 This composition not only highlights the possibilities, but also the compositional issues with tilt. The camera is set to f/3.5, no tilt, with a downward shift – the trees are in sharp focus, but the decking is extremely out of focus.



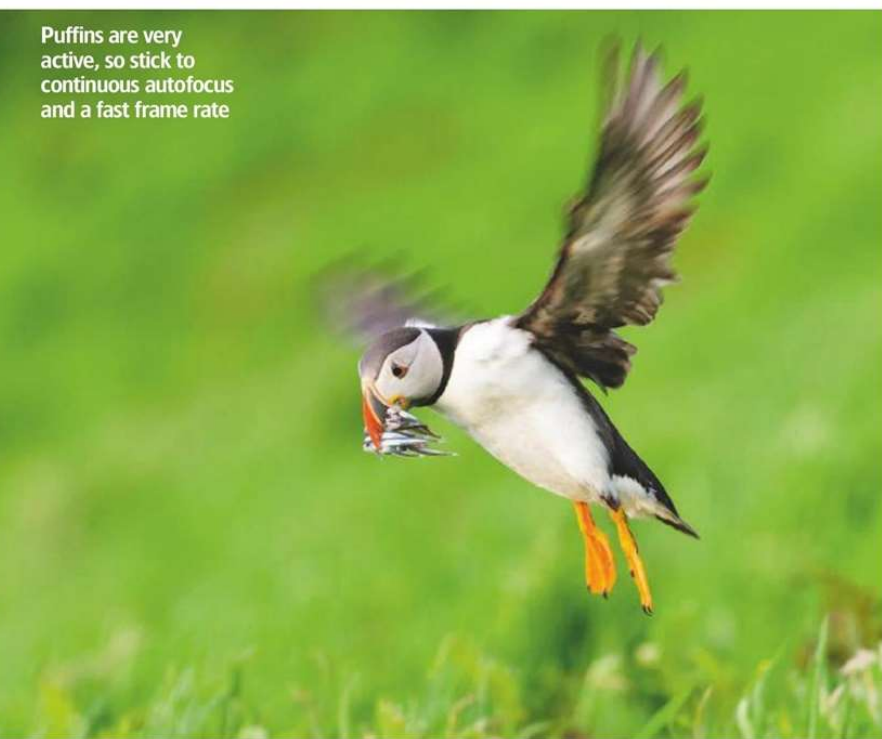
2 By applying some tilt and refocusing in live view (10x), the focal plane is now lying down along the ground, at f/3.5! Sharp focus front to back, but the issue is now with the trees that intersect the almost horizontal focal plane. We need to increase the aperture or this will never work.



3 Now at f/8, the whole image is in focus, just 10 inches from the front of the lens – a task that would be impossible with any 24mm optic. To achieve this it took just 4° of tilt and some careful focusing, by examining the foreground and the treetops in live view. Practise and experiment with tilt to improve your images.



Puffins are very active, so stick to continuous autofocus and a fast frame rate



ALL PICTURES © OSCAR DEWHURST

It's a good idea to check your histogram while shooting, to ensure your image contains as much detail as possible

WILDLIFE WATCH

Puffins

One of the UK's most charismatic birds, puffins are a popular subject with photographers. **Oscar Dewhurst** reveals where and when to capture these comical creatures

Puffins are one of the most charismatic and well-known birds in the UK, largely thanks to their rather comical style and fabulously coloured bill. If you want to photograph them, you will most likely have to find a breeding colony, as during the winter they stay at sea (UK breeders spend the winter in the North Sea or further south, in the Bay of Biscay). They return to their breeding colony in March, where they will stay until mid-August. There are some very well-known colonies across the UK where the birds are accessible for photography. Information on all of them is readily available online. I prefer the ones where you can stay overnight, such as Skomer, as it means you can

photograph them in the early morning and late afternoon light. Once they are at a breeding colony they are hard to miss as the colonies are hives of activity, often with thousands of birds all around.

Different points in the summer let you capture different images. Early in the breeding season, you can photograph them in among flowering plants such as thrift and sea campion. Visit later in the season, once the birds' chicks have hatched, and you'll get the chance to photograph the parents flying back to the nest burrows from the sea, their beaks crammed full of fish. If you wait later still, you may get a chance to photograph the young birds (known as pufflings) as they start to venture from the burrow.

KIT LIST

► Binoculars

I carry binoculars wherever I go when I'm out shooting. They are much lighter and clearer to look through than camera viewfinders, so are invaluable in helping to find my subject.



▼ Telephoto and wideangle lens

A telephoto lens is a given for bird photographers, but as puffins are so confiding, pack a wideangle lens, too. It's ideal for capturing images that show the birds in their environment.



Oscar Dewhurst

is an award-winning wildlife photographer from London. Currently studying biology at university, he has already photographed a wide range of subjects, ranging from urban foxes and bitterns to primates in the Peruvian Amazon. Visit www.oscardewhurst.com.

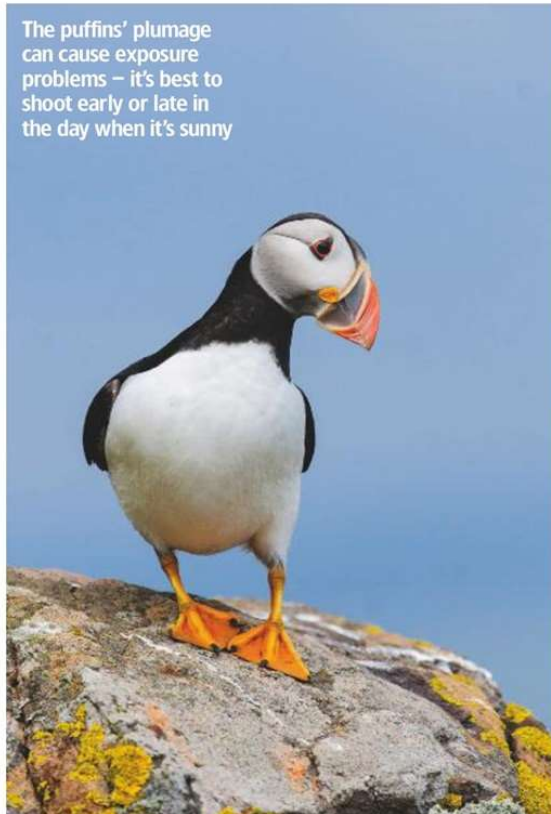


Shooting advice

Puffins tend to be very tame and largely unconcerned about the presence of camera-wielding humans. This means you can take your time and be more creative with your images. Experiment with different focal lengths, from long telephotos used to isolate foreground and backgrounds, to wideangles that show their coastal habitat. Also think about the wind direction, as birds often prefer to take off and land into the wind.

Puffins are usually active, so I stick to continuous autofocus and my fastest frame rate. These settings are very helpful when photographing the birds flying (which they do at lightning speed!). I tend to use single-spot autofocus for all situations, but I know many photographers who use larger groups of focus points, particularly if photographing the birds in flight as it gives a better chance of locking on. The risk is that it can lock on to a wing or another part of the bird that isn't the eye. Puffins' plumage can pose problems for exposure, particularly in bright sunlight. As such, I would always advise shooting early or late in the day (if the sun is out), when the sun is near the horizon. I use manual exposure and meter from something neutral, such as the grass. Check your histogram as you're shooting to ensure you're retaining as much detail as possible.

The puffins' plumage can cause exposure problems – it's best to shoot early or late in the day when it's sunny



About the puffins

A red-listed species in the UK, puffins are one of the UK's most recognised birds.

- **Location** In colonies around the UK, such as Bempton Cliffs, South Stack, Skomer, the Farne Islands, the Isle of May, and the Shetland and Orkney Islands. They spend winter at sea.
- **Size** Stand at about 20cm tall; 47-63cm wingspan.
- **Nest** A burrow in the soil, which they use in future years. They can also use rabbit and manx shearwater burrows, or, where burrowing is not possible, nest under large rocks or in cliff cavities.
- **Diet** Fish, especially sandeels
- **Population** Around 600,000 breeding pairs

Building on SUCCESS

With a thirst for photographing cityscapes and architecture, amateur **Terry Hall** tells AP the secrets behind these beautiful images

When and why did you first become interested in photography?

I first became interested in photography as a child in the 1980s. This was mainly because of my father who owned many film SLRs; he also had his own darkroom, which he built in the loft.

Have you had any professional training or are you self-taught?

I have attended a few workshops and photo walks, but I am mainly self-taught. I get most advice and tips through magazines and websites.

I can see that you love photographing architecture – why is that?

I love modern architecture, especially in London where there seems to be new buildings appearing all the time. I like the perfectly shaped lines that modern buildings tend to have.

What are your top tips for someone interested in photographing architecture?

- Use maps to scout out locations – Google Earth is my best friend!
- Always look up, as most interesting architecture is likely to be above you.
- Be prepared to use higher ISO's than normal as many places don't allow tripods.
- Try to shoot in all types of weather – moody skies look great against buildings, bridges, etc.
- And finally, look for reflections, as they can give images a whole new look.

What are the main challenges when

photographing architecture? How do you overcome them?

In cities, my main challenge can be finding locations. Even with the use of maps, it can be tricky navigating the streets of somewhere like London looking for a spiral staircase. Patience and perseverance is key as I always tend to find the location I want eventually.

How much research do you do before photographing a building?

As mentioned, I always use online maps. If in London, I plan my underground trips in advance so as not to waste time when arriving in the city. I like to cover at least a couple of locations when I visit.

Describe your most memorable photographic experience when shooting architecture.

I remember photographing the Manhattan Bridge in New York City late at night with my wife. After I finished capturing my images, there were no taxis to be seen apart from a car approaching us very slowly and suspiciously. We ignored it as it was definitely not a taxi, and the situation was becoming quite intimidating. Thankfully we spotted a yellow cab just up the road and walked very quickly to hail it down.

Who/what are your main artistic/photographic influences and why?

In terms of a photographic influence, it would be my father, whom I mentioned earlier. But a photographer I admire a great deal is the American Elia Locardi

The Tokyo Tower at night pictured from the World Trade Center viewing platform, NY
Fujifilm X-T1, 10-24mm, 23sec
at f/20, ISO 200



ALL PICTURES © TERRY HALL

This is the beautiful Tulip staircase at the Queen's House in London. Fujifilm X-T2, 10-24mm, 1/10sec at f/4.5, ISO 1250

who travels the world photographing many cities and landscapes. I always enjoy seeing his work.

What equipment do you use?

I use the Fujifilm X-T2 fitted with the XF10-24mm or XF18-55mm lenses. I love the wide angle of the 10-24mm, and find the X-T2 a perfect size and weight for carrying on my trips. I also use a



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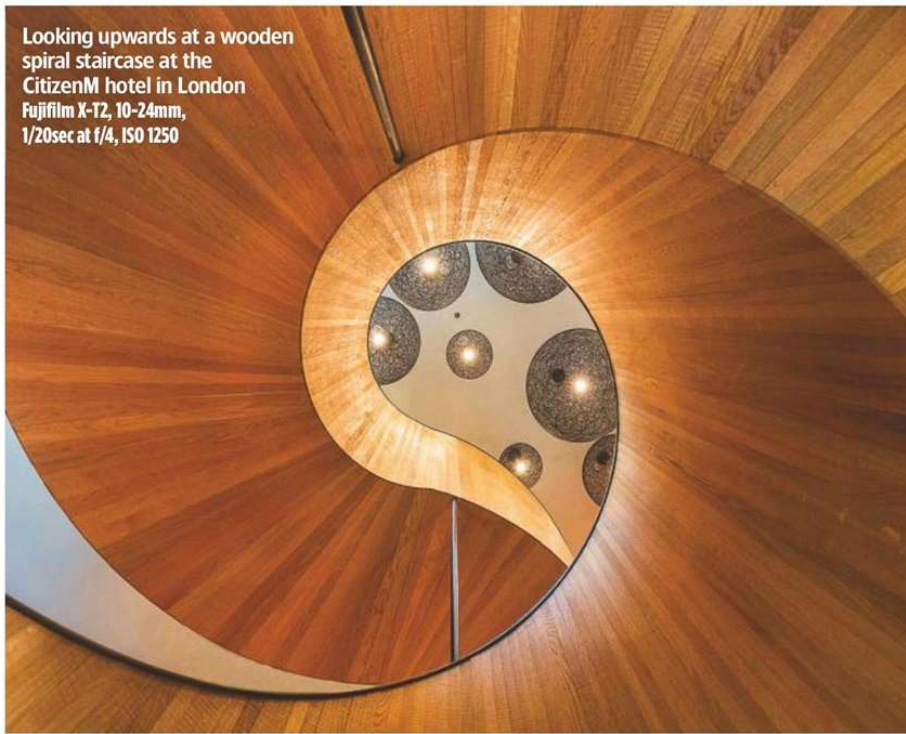
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Looking upwards at a wooden spiral staircase at the CitizenM hotel in London
Fujifilm X-T2, 10-24mm,
1/20sec at f/4, ISO 1250



The wonderful, modern-shaped ceiling at King's Cross Station in London Fujifilm X-T20, 10-24mm, f/4, ISO 400

Manfrotto 190 Go! tripod and Lee 6 stop, 10 stop and 15 stop ND filters.

If money were no object, what would be your dream camera?

I think it would be the Fujifilm GFX 50S. It's a medium format digital camera and the images it produces are stunning.

If money and personal circumstances were no object, what would be your dream assignment?

Photographing the skyscrapers in Dubai. I have visited a few wonderful cities, but I have not yet been to Dubai. I love the Dubai cityscape, and some of the images that I have seen from other photographers who have visited there leave me very envious; I particularly like the fog that accumulates around the tallest buildings there. I will go there one day.



Terry Hall is an amateur photographer based in Bedfordshire. His favourite genres are landscape, travel, city and architecture. He travels extensively and has visited a number of countries. See www.terryhallphoto.com and Instagram @teephoto1981.



Left: This is the 90-metre long pedestrian tunnel at St Pancras railway station in London; it's illuminated by brightly coloured neon lights
Fujifilm X-T2, 18-55mm,
1/60sec at f/8, ISO 2500

Below: This shot was taken resting on top of a glass cabinet, allowing for a nice reflection of the Victoria and Albert Museum's interior
Fujifilm X-T20, 10-24mm,
1/9sec at f/14, ISO 200



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Reader Portfolio

Spotlight on readers' excellent images and how they captured them



David Thompson, Somerset



David first became interested in photography at the age of 15 after being introduced to a Pentax Spotmatic SP500 and a roll of Kodak Tri-X 400 film. 'My life has been enriched by the process of recording images and being able to look back on these moments,' he explains.

David's career as a teacher has enabled him to share his passion for image making with his students, and he is always looking for fresh approaches. Living in the West Country he is lucky enough to have some photogenic landscapes on his doorstep. 'I am particularly fond of using long lenses to isolate details,' he says. As well as landscape photography David enjoys wideangle architectural work, character portraits and wedding photography. Visit www.davidrthompson.co.uk.

Misty layers

1 This early morning shot across the Blackmore Vale in Dorset was converted into black & white using Nik Silver Efex Pro 2.

Olympus OM-D E-M1, 40-150mm, 1/1250sec at f/8, ISO 100



Glastonbury evening sun

2 Taken from the top of the Tor looking back towards the town, this atmospheric picture shows the shape of the hillside beautifully.

Olympus OM-D E-M1, 75mm, 1/650sec at f/5, ISO 200





Manfrotto The Reader Portfolio

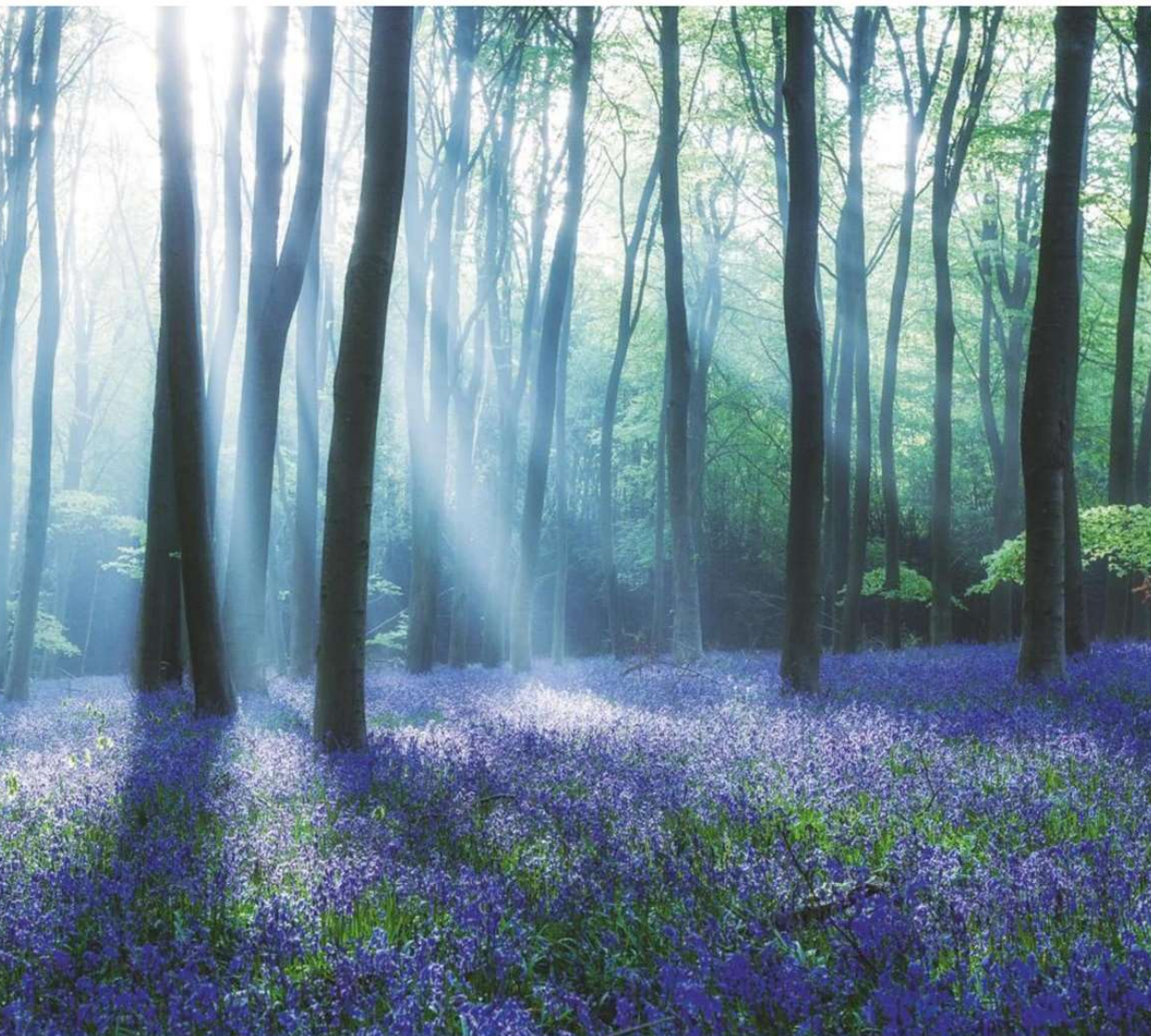
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Submit your images

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Bluebell woods

3 The bluebells at Micheldever Wood in Winchester attract photographers from far and wide, but David had to make several visits before the beauty of the blooms were matched by the weather.

Nikon D3S,
24-70mm, 1/60sec
at f/9, ISO 640

Lone tree

5 It was a cold and frosty morning when David captured these shadows creeping across the landscape near Blandford Forum in Dorset.

Olympus OM-D E-M1,
75mm, 1/350sec at
f/5.6, ISO 200



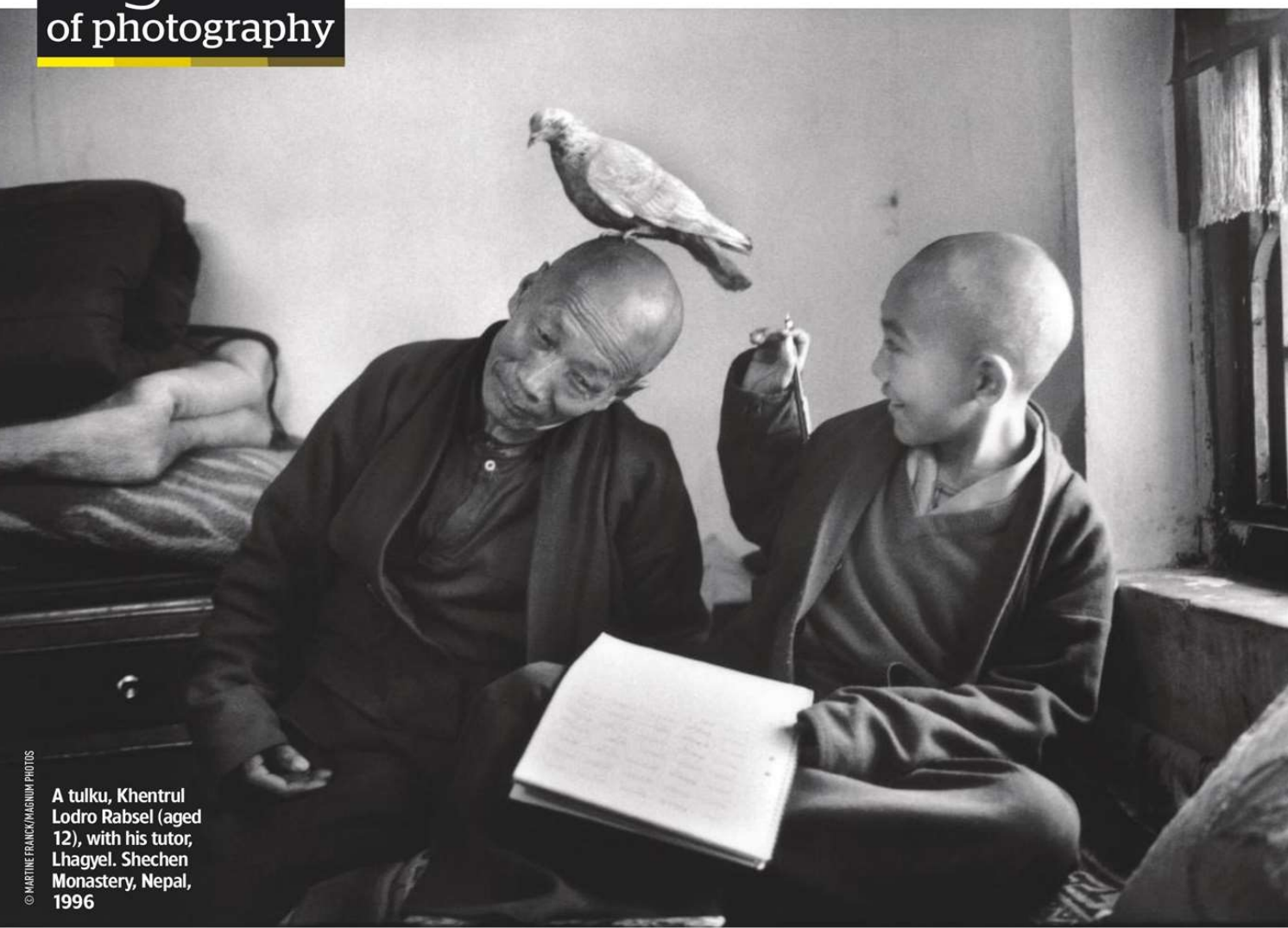
Bumpy road

4 David is a fan of beech trees, so this avenue near Kingston Lacy in Dorset really appealed to him. He used a zoom lens to compress the perspective and enhance the bumps.

Olympus OM-D E-M1,
40-150mm, 1/125sec
at f/5.6, ISO 400



Legends of photography



A tulku, Khentrul Lodro Rabsel (aged 12), with his tutor, Lhagyel. Shechen Monastery, Nepal, 1996

© MARTINE FRANCK/MAGNUM PHOTOS

© GETTY IMAGES/JEAN MARC LOURIS/ICOM/ALAMY



Martine Franck

A master of humanistic documentary photography, writes **Oliver Atwell**

Photography is about connections. When we look at an image, we are offered a portal to unite with individuals separated from us by geography, time and space. It's a medium that succeeds through a process of empathy. This is something some photographers understand better than others. Belgian photographer Martine Franck – who was a member of the Magnum agency for over 32 years until her death in

2012, and the second wife of Henri Cartier-Bresson – was a photographer who appreciated the notion of human connection through photography. When you look at her images, you are drawn in, absorbed. So many of her beautiful black & white images, taken on a 35mm Leica camera, involve the subject looking directly at the camera or otherwise looking into the eyes of their companions in the frame. Rarely are the images confrontational. Often, they

are about the joy of being alive in a particular moment.

Franck's body of work captured some of the 20th century's most significant cultural figures, such as the poet Seamus Heaney and the French academic Michel Foucault. But perhaps her most interesting images revealed the hidden worlds of fringe cultures, most notably Tibetan Buddhists, a community she documented in the mid-1990s.

The photograph we see here was taken in the Shechen Monastery in Nepal. The young boy is Khentrul Lodro Rabsel, who was 12 at the time this image was shot. Next to him sits his tutor, Lhagyel. At the age of five, Khentrul decided it was time for him to enter the monastery. The reason is that Khentrul was what's known as a tulku, which is to say he is a reincarnated lama, a title for a teacher of the Dharma in Tibetan Buddhism.

It is believed that two or

three years after their death, important lamas are reincarnated in the body of a child. The search for this child is based on the information left by the lama himself in such things as dreams and visions. It also relies on the intuition of other lamas.

This image is perhaps one of her most famous, and perfectly encapsulates the humanity of Franck's work. Despite the fact we are seeing a community that is alien to us, we relate entirely to the playfulness of the scene. This image's companions in the project are equally soulful and equally thorough in their investigation of the subject.

Perhaps the greatest lesson we can take from Franck's work is that documentary photography doesn't have to mean focusing exclusively on hardship, warfare, grit and suffering – sometimes it's enough to simply revel in the joys of being human.





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Hire a lens

Fancy trying a lens before you buy it, or need a lens for a one-off shoot? **Michael Topham** explains the ins and outs of lens hire and tests six services

As far as hobbies go, photography is one of the more expensive pursuits you can undertake. Each year, many of us will spend hundreds, if not thousands, of pounds pursuing our love for taking pictures. If money were no object, we'd all have cabinets filled with lenses for the brand of camera we own. Instead, we buy the glass we can afford and aspire to build up a collection of optics that'll serve us well for the images we like to take. There will be the odd occasion though when you wish you had access to a lens you don't already own or one that's just too expensive to buy for a one-off shoot or a trip of a lifetime. On such occasions, you can obtain a lens through lens hire companies who, for a fraction of the price of buying a lens outright, are prepared to lend you a lens for a period of time.

Popularity

Lens hire has really taken off in the past few years, so much so, that retailers and several second-hand stockists have jumped on the rental bandwagon. One possible explanation is the increased number of people exploring the idea of trying a lens before buying it, which is like test-driving a car to check it performs well before spending money on it. Handing over a nominal fee to try a lens and find out if it's right or not makes a lot of sense and could prevent you from making a costly mistake. The minimum length of hire varies and many companies offer incentives such as a one-day fixed hire price over a weekend or free delivery when you choose a service like Click and Collect, which allows you to get on with your day without having to wait around for a courier to drop off or pick up your hired kit.

The booking process

The easiest way to hire a lens is online. Be prepared to search multiple companies as some have better stock than others. As a new customer you'll be asked to supply certain paperwork before the lens you hire is dispatched – typically a utility bill, ID proof and valid UK contact numbers, both home and mobile. Once you're eligible to hire a lens and have chosen your hire dates, you'll need to decide on your delivery/collection options. Hire companies can arrange a courier to dispatch and collect a lens from your address, usually for an additional fee, so you may prefer to drop into a local store or a pickup/drop-off point to keep costs down. Be clear about the collection and pickup times as you could incur a fine if the lens arrives back late. Save the lens hire company's number and email address on your phone – that way if you get stuck somewhere or your situation changes, you can let them know immediately.

Deposit

Hire companies aren't prepared to hand over an expensive lens to a first-time client without putting down some form of deposit, usually taken a few days before dispatch. The deposit amount will vary according to the value of equipment. Any deposit paid will be refunded upon safe return of the goods, so it's in your best interest to carefully inspect a lens as soon as you lay your hands on it to check for any sign of damage; this will also let the hire company send out a replacement lens if there is a fault, and minimise any chance of you being let down in the field.

Insurance

Insurance cover should not be overlooked. Some companies add it



Testbench LENS HIRE

to the hire fee – for example, Wex rental adds a 10% damage waiver to the rental that covers against any accidental damage. If you use a hire company's insurance, check what the excess would be if a claim had to be made. This is usually around £250. If you decide to arrange insurance yourself – something most companies allow – be prepared to supply a copy of the insurance policy and have it verified

before a lens is sent out. *Amateur Photographer* also provides insurance cover for camera kit – see www.amateurphotographerinsurance.co.uk. You'll want to take great care of any hired lens as if it was your own so that you don't get stung by a costly repair/replacement fee or have to pay the insurance excess.

Don't let this put you off hiring a lens though, just be extra vigilant of things like water ingress and leaving equipment unsupervised in a car or public area, which could result in the insurance being null and void. In the event of loss or theft, the incident should be reported to the police immediately and a crime reference number obtained. If a lens is damaged or lost at the airport you will need to obtain a property irregularity report from the airline you're travelling with and from where the damage/loss is first discovered (i.e. the airport in which you arrive discovering the damage or loss). It's paramount you let the hire company know and keep them updated if a lost item is later found.

Hirecamera delivers its lenses in secure Peli cases and provides everything you need for a hassle-free hire



Mike's top tips on hiring a lens

LIKE anything new or that you haven't tried before, you may have concerns about using kit that belongs to somebody else. To attract new customers to their services, it's in the best interest of lens rental companies to make the process as simple and straightforward as possible. Most lens hire companies break down the process of hiring into simple steps. When you first visit a lens rental website, the best place to head to is the 'How it works' page, where you'll find detailed instructions of the process. If you don't find the answer to what you're looking for or you're still unsure about something, check the frequently asked

questions (FAQ) page or give the hire company a call – they'll be happy to help and talk you through anything you need clarification on.

Most lens hire companies will have a good stock of lenses to fulfil demand, but you'll want to remember that there are busier times of the year for some lenses than others. Summer airshows and motorsport events typically attract those who might not own a telephoto zoom lens or want one that offers a greater reach. Wideangle lenses for landscapes and architectural photography are usually popular around early spring and late autumn when the light is at its best. Portrait lenses tend to be popular all

year round but, again, can be in high demand during the summer, particularly with wedding photographers.

To give yourself the best chance of hiring the lens you want when you need it, it's best to book in advance as early as possible. Unlike flight or train bookings though, the price doesn't reduce if you book it up well in advance.

Something you will want to look out for are rental deals that some companies offer, usually around bank holidays or Christmas. It's not unusual for lens hire companies to offer a few extra days' hire for free, so once you've found a hire service you trust, do follow them on social media to keep up to date with any special offers.

User



Stu Meech

www.stumeech.co.uk

What made you think about hiring a lens?

The first time I hired a lens was about seven years ago. I needed a better lens to photograph a wedding, but didn't want to buy a new one at great expense when I only needed it for a few days. Since then it's been a way of testing lenses before purchasing or just to try something slightly different.

Which lens hire service do you use?

I use lensesforhire.co.uk. They have large stock, excellent prices and have always offered me a great service.



Steve Walker

swpics.co.uk

What made you decide on which lens hire service to use?

I opted for the company LensesForHire for two reasons: a colleague who had used it recommended it as being good value for money, and the company was near my workplace, making it convenient to collect and return the lens in person.



Dean Clark

dizzypicsphotography.wordpress.com/author/dizzypicsphotography/

How did you decide on which lens hire service to use?

I searched online for local or national delivery camera/lens hire, and after reading several online reviews I decided to use Hirecamera.

What lens did you hire and why?

I hired the Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 APO DG HSM. As I am considering purchasing a new telephoto lens, I wanted to find out how this lens would perform with my Nikon D3300 in capturing moving fighter aircraft, at long distance or high speeds. I was very excited to get my hands on it at a low cost.

opinion

What's it like to hire a lens? Here's feedback from three photographers who have used rental services

What lens did you hire and why?

I've hired several, the most recent being a Nikkor 24mm f/3.5 PC-E Tilt-Shift. It's a lens I've thought about purchasing so that I can achieve perfectly straight verticals in camera. But at £1,500 brand new, I'd like to be totally sure before buying one.

Was the lens packaged and delivered to a high standard?

Yes, the lenses have always come delivered in a well-padded box with a plastic postal bag to seal it from any bad weather, with another included for the return delivery.

Is there any advice you'd offer to first-time hirers?

Take time to compare prices from several suppliers and always remember to check if the price includes insurance or not.



© STU REICH

What lens did you hire and why?

When I read about the Nikkor 85mm f/1.4G lens, I immediately wanted to try it out for my own company portraiture style. It's a very expensive lens, so hiring it for a couple of days seemed the best way to try it out. The trial was a great success and I bought the lens and used it for all my company headshot photography after that. On another occasion I hired a 70-200mm f/2.8 lens because mine was being repaired, and I needed the lens to cover a company event.

Is there any advice you'd offer to first-time hirers?

If, like me, one of your best lenses is broken just when you need it, I say simply 'go for rental' – it has saved my bacon twice in my photographic career. If, on the other hand, you're renting in order to evaluate, say, a top-spec lens, I think it's best to have a specific project in mind which is near how you plan to use such a lens in real life, so that the rental enables you to make a confident purchase/no-purchase decision.



© JUSTINE WALKER

How would you describe the booking experience?

The website was very user friendly, and prior to ordering online I called the company directly to clarify information and compatibility of the lens with my camera. The booking was straightforward with good information regarding dates and times of booking, delivery and collection, item description and items included, and price and deposit details.

Is there any advice you'd offer to first-time hirers?

Feel confident in contacting Hireacamera directly to confirm details of the product or bookings, just as I did. If you feel you have made a mistake, they will do all they can to assist and solve any issues to help their customers. The only information I would like to see added to the listing of each lens would be a compatibility list of cameras for each item.



© JEAN CLARK

Rental company round-up



Love photography? Love Lens Lab...

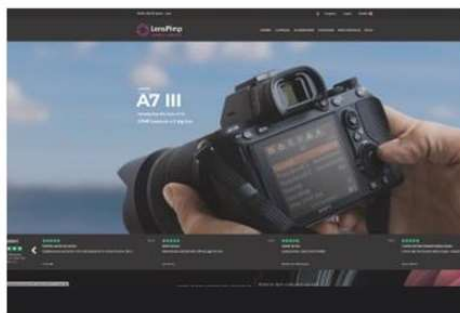


Lens Lab

- www.lenslab.co.uk
- Haywards Heath, West Sussex
- 0739 1634 879

Lens Lab stocks a variety of Canon, Nikon, Sony and Micro Four Thirds lenses. Unfortunately the Canon EF 16–35mm f/2.8L III USM I wanted to hire didn't show as available, but I received a fast response after making an enquiry online, with confirmation that the lens could be sourced through one of Lens Lab's partners. Lenses can be reserved up to six months in advance and you're required to sign and return a hire agreement form, supply two forms of identification and pay a 90% deposit of the equipment cost on your first hire. On all standard hires, the hirer is liable for the full value of the equipment should anything go wrong including theft, loss and damage, so you may wish to take up Lens Lab's insurance option (£25 per hire), which limits your liability to £250 per item. Its insurance is only valid in the UK so if you're planning to go abroad you'll need to arrange your own cover.

The lens I hired arrived the day before my hire started; it was packed in a cardboard box labelled with 'Fragile' stickers. Inside, the lens was protected in a Tenba lens wrap bound in bubble wrap. All the documentation, including return labels, was neatly grouped in a plastic slip, along with useful packaging information checklist and fun clash of the cameras trump card game. The condition of the supplied lens was excellent, with not a mark on the barrel or a speck of dust on the front element. The lens wasn't supplied with a protective UV filter though. Various delivery/return options are available, including free pickup and drop off from the office, but I settled for the budget delivery/collect option that added £22 to the minimum one day hire fee (£44). Helpfully, a drop ship label was included, so I could leave the lens at a local drop point at a time that was suitable for me.



Lens Pimp

- www.lenspimp.com
- Plymouth, Devon
- 01752 310132

Established in 2010, Lens Pimp has built up a good selection of cameras and lenses to hire, supporting users of both DSLRs and mirrorless models. The website has a brilliant search facility; however checking if the lens is available isn't as clear as other sites with a calendar view. The minimum hire period is a three-day hire, and you can hire up to six months in advance. The Canon EF 16–35mm f/2.8L III USM was available when I wanted it and as a first-time customer, I was required to supply ID and proof of address with a utility bill on request. A deposit isn't usually required on UK hires, but is on international orders. Insurance is included in the hire fee, and should you lose or damage equipment you'll be required to pay an excess of £180. Taking a lens outside of the UK is also covered by Lens Pimp's insurance, provided it's not used in war-ridden countries.

Soon after booking, I received an email with details of the 1-hour time slot for delivery the next day – one day prior to the hire starting. The lens arrived safely in a cardboard box surrounded by foam in its original lens pouch. A basic checklist and sticky return label were included, with the collection date clearly outlined in bold text. The supplied lens was in immaculate condition. The front and rear elements were dust-free and Lens Pimp stickers were adorned to the barrel, caps and hood. Another nice touch was the Sigma WR protector filter that protected the front element from any nasty scrapes in use. It's recommended that lenses are returned by Royal Mail special delivery to keep costs down, however I arranged collection from home. The cost of hiring the lens for three days over a weekend came to £69, with delivery and collection adding an extra £29 to the fee.



Hirecamera

- www.hirecamera.com
- Mayfield, East Sussex
- 020 3797 8796

Hirecamera offers an extensive range of lenses to hire for DSLR and mirrorless users. The website is a breeze to navigate and you can check live availability of any lens that's stocked direct from the homepage. All the big brand manufacturers' lenses are listed and you can refine your search by different criteria, including weather resistance. The hire process is broken down into four easy steps: search, select, deliver and shoot. There are two options regarding deposit and insurance. You can either take out the insurance Hirecamera offers and pay the excess a few days before dispatch of the hire, which is refunded in full on safe return of the lens, or opt to pay a deposit, which is usually more than the excess and around 25% of the value of the lens you're hiring. The cost of hiring a lens is made very clear. The shortest option is a daily/weekend hire, and there are dropdowns where you can read a product overview, reviews and view accessories that you may wish to add to your order, such as an appropriately sized variable ND filter.

Soon after booking the Canon EF 16–35mm f/2.8L III USM, I received an email confirming the lens had been dispatched from the warehouse. It was delivered promptly the next morning, a day prior to the official start on the loan, brilliantly protected in its own Peli case, cushioned by foam and bubble wrap. Inside, all the documentation was neatly folded, with a detailed equipment-condition report and a pack of sweets included. The lens supplied was in mint condition and the front element was protected with a UV filter. I chose to have the lens delivered and picked up by courier, which added £24 to the daily/weekend fee of £41. To reduce the cost of hire, Hirecamera offers the option to pick up and drop off hired lenses for free (up to 7kg) from various points around the country using its Click and Collect service. For multiple lenses over 7kg there's a pro-rata charge dependant on the extra weight, and finding your nearest location is quick on the website. Returning a hired lens is simple too – just pop the Peli case into the courier bag, attach the sticky return label and wait for the courier to collect it. Alternatively, take it to a local drop-off point at your convenience.





Camera Jungle

- www.camerajungle.co.uk/rental
- Oxford Street, London
- 0330 808 3324

Camera Jungle is best known for buying, selling and part-exchanging camera kit – but it also provides a camera and lens rental service. Unlike other hire services, the website lacks the facility to book online so you'll need to phone or email (rental@camerajungle.co.uk) to check availability and complete your order. A rather limited selection of permanent Canon, Nikon and Sony rental kit is listed and the Canon EF 16–35mm f/2.8L III USM wasn't included. After sending an email to enquire, I received a quick reply telling me they did have a sample of the lens I wanted to hire. After providing photo ID (via email for rentals being delivered, or in person for collections), a £1,300 deposit was put down, which would be refunded minus the rental fee (£35 per day) and delivery charges (£4.99 with no additional charge for collection) upon safe return of the lens at the end of the hire period. Camera Jungle doesn't include insurance with its lens rentals, leaving this for the hirer to arrange if they so wish. Most items stocked by Camera Jungle can be hired by the day, but for some of the less expensive consumer-grade items there is a minimum rental period of two days. If you require a lens for an entire week, this is discounted to the price of four days' rental and there's the option of keeping the price low by picking up and dropping off hired lenses from the company's office in Oxford Street, London.

The lens I hired was delivered a day before the first day of hire in a branded cardboard box. Inside this box the lens was protected in a Canon lens pouch and Camera Jungle plastic wrapping, fastened down to a layer of cardboard with extra plastic wrap to prevent it moving in transit. The supplied lens was in 'as new' condition and had a Hoya UV filter attached for added protection. A close inspection of the front and rear elements highlighted a few specks of dust between the lens and the UV filter, which were removed easily enough before it was used. To keep things consistent, I opted to have the lens collected from my home address. Unlike most of the other hire services tested, the courier was the one who supplied the returns label upon pickup before it was delivered back to Camera Jungle.



Wex Rental

- <https://rental.wexphotovideo.com>
- Whitechapel, London
- 020 7383 5127

Fixation and Calumet used to be separate hire services, but since Wex acquired both companies they've been merged together to form Wex Rental. By combining the two, Wex Rental is able to offer a huge variety of kit to hire, from the latest cameras and lenses to accessories and lighting equipment. The homepage provides a brilliant search facility to find what you're looking for in seconds and the price guide breaks down how much a lens costs based on a daily/weekend hire, weekly hire, fortnightly hire or monthly hire. Adding a lens to the rental cart gives you the option to select your hire dates and choose your delivery/collection options, but you may prefer to pick up or drop back any hired items to one of nine stores around the country, which is free. A damage waiver at a standard rate of 10% of the hire charge is automatically added to the hire fee to cover against any accidental damage and the amount you're liable to pay if a claim has to be made is £250. A security deposit to the retail value of the item being hired is required from basic account holders. Alternatively, a minimum deposit of £250 for the first £5,000 value of equipment hired can be paid if you opt to set up a low deposit account instead. Whichever you choose, valid photo ID and two proofs of address no older than two months old are requested.

The Canon EF 16–35mm f/2.8L III USM lens I hired arrived a day prior to the start of the hire, with the cost for a daily/weekend hire coming to £46.20. Opting for delivery and collection added an extra £21.95. Although the lens did arrive safely, the cardboard box and bubble wrap was tatty, and to my dismay, the lens hood was missing from the Sigma lens pouch it was sent in. The lens was clearly a well-used example and as well as having a few scratches on the barrel and focus distance window, there were oily smears on the Hoya UV filter it was fitted with. Compared to the other services this was a little disappointing. Rather than dropping the lens back to a Wex store for free, I paid to have it collected by courier. No returns label was issued, so I had to write the return delivery address on the box in marker pen before it was picked up and returned to London.



Lenses For Hire

- www.lensesforhire.co.uk
- Maidenhead, Berkshire
- 01628 639941

As its name suggests, Lenses For Hire specialises in renting out a large selection of lenses, catering for Canon, Fujifilm, Nikon and Sony users. It also stocks various third-party lenses from Sigma, Tamron and Tokina. Though it's not possible to search for a lens or check availability direct from the homepage, it's easy enough to find what you're looking for after clicking on the 'Get started' link. The minimum rental period is a three-day hire and once you've found the lens you want, you're presented with a clear description of the lens and an excellent availability chart that lets you check or book up to six months ahead. Adding a lens to your basket and then proceeding gives you the option to select hire dates via a calendar view, choose delivery/collection methods and inspect a breakdown of how much the hire will cost with insurance and VAT included. The cost of hiring the Canon EF 16–35mm f/2.8L III USM for three days came to £69, with an extra £31 for delivery and collection by courier. There is the option to collect and return kit to the company's Maidenhead office for free or arrange the return of equipment yourself if you'd prefer. A refundable deposit isn't usually deemed necessary, and if any loss or damage to the equipment is accidental and Lenses For Hire is able to recover losses from the insurers, liability is capped at the value of the insurance excess (£150+VAT). A confirmation email outlined the hire period and this was followed up by a one-hour slot delivery confirmation email the next day before the lens arrived.

The lens was packaged in a cardboard box labelled fragile and was well protected by thick foam. A returns label, information sheet, lens manual and checklist were all neatly folded inside. Pulling the lens out of its lens pouch revealed that it was in superb condition – the front/rear elements and fitted Hoya UV filter were immaculately clean and the barrel, rear cap and front cap all had stickers applied to prevent them getting mixed up with others. I got an email confirming the collection of the lens the day before the hire ended, followed by an email on the day of collection from the courier specifying the time they'd arrive to collect.



Testbench CHEAP CREATIVE LENSES



Cheap creative lenses

Interesting optics don't have to cost a fortune. **Andy Westlake** tries out some inexpensive options to stimulate your creativity – and finds some to avoid, too

One of the quickest shortcuts to kick-start your creativity is to buy a new lens. Acquiring an optic that can do something distinctly different from your existing kit – zoom wider or longer, focus closer or more selectively, or simply apply a different look to your images – can help you see and interpret the world differently. The only problem is, such lenses are often expensive to buy new.

Venture onto Amazon and eBay, however, and you'll find plenty of

options at low prices, including some brand-new lenses coming out of China. Indeed, now, there are quite a few companies making inexpensive manual-focus primes for mirrorless cameras, with more designs showing up all the time from emerging brands such as 7artisans, Kamlan, Meike, NEEWER and Zhongyi Mitakon. For those willing to spend a bit more money on fast optics, the latter even makes a range of f/0.95 and f/1.2 lenses.

DSLR users aren't quite so well served, not least because they don't

Most of the lenses tested in this article cost well under £100, with the most expensive being just £170. Most can be bought direct from the manufacturer via the Amazon UK website.

work well with manual lenses. However Yongnuo makes some very cheap autofocus lenses for Canon and Nikon users, and having started off by cloning existing lenses, has recently started to produce some intriguing home-grown designs.

There are also some creative optics around from the likes of Lensbaby, and they can be worth considering too. I tried out a selection of budget options to find out which are any good, and those that are better left well alone.

Yongnuo YN 50mm f/1.8

Chinese firm Yongnuo may not be the most familiar name to photographers, but it produces a range of inexpensive autofocus primes for DSLRs. Its YN 50mm f/1.8 costs less than £50 on eBay, including postage. Its bargain price can be explained by the fact that it's pretty much a direct clone of the old Canon EF 50mm f/1.8 II (although the F-mount variant has more Nikon-esque styling).

The YN 50mm f/1.8's build quality is super-cheap, with an all-plastic barrel and lens mount, while its autofocus is slow and noisy by current standards. But optically it's a good old-fashioned double-Gauss design, using 6 elements in 5 groups, which means it's fully capable of giving excellent results. It's not super-sharp wide open, but stop down to f/8 and you'll get stunningly sharp results right across the frame on either APS-C or full-frame, including on the 50MP Canon EOS 5DS R.



The Yongnuo YN 50mm f/1.8 gives sharp images at a very low price

There are a couple of changes compared to the Canon 'original', the most important being that the aperture diaphragm uses seven curved blades rather than five straight ones. As a result, the Yongnuo delivers vastly more-attractive defocused backgrounds when used at apertures of f/2.8 or thereabouts.

If you have a bit more money to spend I'd still recommend a Canon EF 50mm f/1.8 STM or Nikon AF-S Nikkor

At a glance

- £40
- For DSLRs
- Covers full-frame
- Canon or Nikon mount

50mm f/1.8 G ahead of the Yongnuo, for their better build and autofocus. Also, if you choose to buy this lens you'll forgo the kind of warranty and after-sales service you'd get from Canon or Nikon. But it's so cheap, you might well consider it worth a punt.

If you're on a really tight budget, or want a lens you can almost treat as disposable, the Yongnuo YN 50mm f/1.8 is capable of excellent results, and offers truly remarkable value for money.

DJ Optical Viltrox 35mm f/2

For a long time, this lens was the cheapest full-frame E-mount lens available. It's since been eclipsed by the Meike 50mm f/1.7, but still promises excellent value. It's mostly sold under the 7artisans brand, but mine has a Viltrox badge. At just 42mm long, it's one of the smallest lenses

you can use on a Sony Alpha 7.

First impressions are really positive.

The robust-feeling, weighty metal barrel has a smoothly rotating focus ring, complete with distance and depth-of-field scales. A slim aperture ring adjacent to the camera body closes the 10-bladed



At a glance

- £160
- For mirrorless
- Covers full-frame
- Canon EF-M, Fujifilm, Micro Four Thirds, Sony E

diaphragm down directly; it clicks firmly at full-stop increments, but with large enough gaps to be set at intermediate positions. The 43mm filter thread is surrounded by a shallow slide-out lens hood, and the minimum focus is 35cm.

Optically, though, this lens is best described as patchy. While it's advertised as covering full-frame, image quality is downright poor towards the periphery of the image, with massive vignetting and barely any corner detail when shot at f/2. Even stopped down, the corners never properly sharpen up with distant subjects. However at closer range it's possible to get images that are pretty sharp across the frame, at least when stopped down to f/8 or so. Alternatively you can take advantage of the f/2 aperture for selective focusing. Overall, though, this lens is probably better suited to APS-C cameras.

If you can pick up this lens cheaply it's worth a play, but to me its questionable optics outweigh the benefits of its fast aperture, at least on full-frame. For most purposes, you'd probably be better off using an adapted 35mm f/2.8 from an old manual-focus film system. Likewise, I'd recommend that Alpha 7 users who can stretch to £250 or so should buy the autofocus Samyang AF 35mm f/2.8 FE instead.

Shot wide open on a full-frame camera, this lens shows considerable vignetting



Testbench CHEAP CREATIVE LENSES

The NewYi 35mm f/1.7 is ideal for selective-focus photography

At a glance

- £35
- For mirrorless
- Covers APS-C
- Fits most cameras via C-mount adapter

NewYi 35mm f/1.7

You'll find this curiosity advertised on eBay as a Fujian 35mm f/1.7 (see right), presumably to take advantage of that lens's cult popularity. But while it might use the same glass, it's a very different design. It's still a C-mount optic, which means adapters are available for every mirrorless mount, but it has a completely different housing that sports

conventional-looking aperture and focus rings. It's also shorter, lacking the built-in front shading of the CCTV lens, and has a considerably nicer 12-blade circular aperture diaphragm.

You can buy the lens either alone, or



in a set with a metal hood and the mount adapter of your choice – mine is set up for Canon EF-M. Screw the lens into

your adapter and you'll almost certainly find the focus and distance scales pointing in a random direction, but it's possible to fix this by adjusting the rotating mount, via four set-screws at the base of the lens. You won't find this explained in the instructions, though, because there aren't any.

Optically this lens is much like the Fujian, with a small central sharp region corresponding to the tiny sensor size for which it was originally designed, surrounded by ever-increasing blur. It's hugely prone to flare from bright light sources, so getting the hood makes sense; alternatively, this effect can be used to creative effect. On mine the aperture and distance markings bear little relationship to reality, but that's not necessarily a problem, as you're unlikely to use them to determine focus and exposure anyway.

This absolutely isn't a lens for conventional photography, but it can be really interesting for selective focus shooting, giving quirky swirly bokeh and much greater subject isolation than its maximum aperture might suggest. It may cost more than the Fujian CCTV lens, but it's rather nicer to use.

Used on APS-C, only the centre of the image is sharp



At a glance

- £20
- For mirrorless
- Covers APS-C
- Fits most cameras via C-mount adapter

Fujian 35mm f/1.7

One of the first lenses to be widely adopted by the Micro Four Thirds users in the system's early years, the Fujian 35mm f/1.7 is something of a cult classic. It's a CCTV lens with a screw-thread C-mount, which means it can be adapted to work on almost any

mirrorless camera. Unusually for such a lens, however, it fully illuminates an APS-C image sensor. But this isn't the same thing as saying its image circle properly covers APS-C; instead it's only remotely sharp in the middle of the frame, with huge levels of blur into the



This C-mount CCTV lens is an interesting option for close-ups



corners. Because of this, I like it best on Micro Four Thirds, where it makes for an interesting short telephoto lens.

Despite its robust-feeling metal construction, mechanically this lens is pretty crude. The slim cylindrical barrel has twin rings for focus and aperture control; on mine they're both a bit scratchy. The rudimentary 6-bladed aperture is massively asymmetric when stopped down, and there's no index mark on the barrel to indicate its setting, so I painted one on myself. But you don't buy this lens to stop it down; it's all about the interesting pictures you can get at large apertures.

This lens's signature look is a sharp centre with blurred edges, which makes it great for isolating your subjects at large apertures. With the right kind of background, it gives characterful swirly bokeh. It's entirely a lens for creative photography, and won't suit everyone, but it's a lot of fun to play with.

At a glance

- £60
- For mirrorless
- Covers APS-C
- Canon EF-M, Fujifilm, Micro Four Thirds and Sony E mounts

DJ Optical Discover 25mm f/1.7

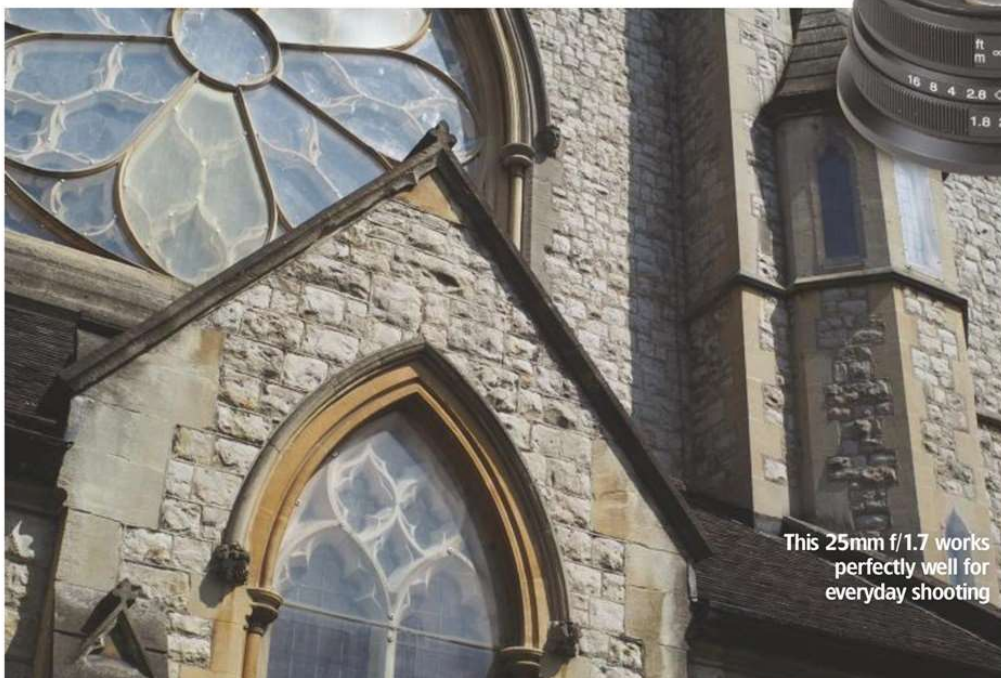
This lens is now mostly sold under the 7artisans brand, although my Micro Four Thirds-mount example sports an older Discover label. In principle, it comes from the same stable as the Viltrox 35mm f/2, but it's so different aesthetically and optically that it's difficult to believe they originate from

the same design house. Compared to the spartan look of the 35mm f/2, this one is rather fussier, with a flared section around the unusually large-diameter mount. The aperture ring is a bit broader and easier to use too, but has no

click stops. The filter thread is 46mm, and the minimum focus 18cm.

Used on Micro Four Thirds, this lens performs the same role as the 50mm f/1.8 primes that used to be sold with 35mm film SLRs. Its optical character is pretty similar too: it's sharp in the centre at full aperture, but noticeably softer in the corners, with a touch of vignetting that does a nice job of framing the subject. Stopped down to f/5.6, it's sharp right across the frame. There's a little barrel distortion, but it's far from troublesome.

I really like this lens: it focuses smoothly, gives attractive images with plenty of detail and attractive bokeh, and you won't find yourself confusing the aperture and focus rings. It makes an interesting alternative to Panasonic's inexpensive autofocus Lumix G 25mm f/1.7, as this kind of manual-focus lens gives a more hands-on shooting experience that makes you feel like you're creating the image, rather than letting the camera do it.



This 25mm f/1.7 works perfectly well for everyday shooting

Testbench CHEAP CREATIVE LENSES

Olympus 9mm f/8 Fisheye Body Cap Lens

At a glance

- £80
- For Micro Four Thirds mirrorless



Few camera firms have indulged in making cheap, optically compromised lenses, but Olympus is an exception, with its two 'body cap lenses' for Micro Four Thirds. Technically they're sold as accessories rather than lenses, and they don't bear the Zuiko badge. The message is clear: these are really just meant as a bit of fun.

Both lenses place tiny optical units into plastic housings barely thicker than a conventional body cap. Two versions are available: a moderate wideangle 15mm f/8 and this 9mm f/8 fisheye. On both the aperture is fixed, and a lever on the front is used for opening the lens cover and focusing. Most of the time, though, you'll leave them set to a click-stopped hyperfocal setting.

While the 15mm is a rectilinear

wideangle, this 9mm fisheye shows extreme barrel distortion, rendering straight lines as curves. It covers a 140° angle of view, which isn't quite as broad as a 'proper' 180° fisheye but still gives striking results. It can be focused as close as 20cm. Optically it's considerably better than you might expect, giving a surprising amount of detail right across the frame. There's significant colour fringing in the corners due to lateral chromatic aberration, but this is a one-click fix in raw processing.

I wouldn't normally bother carrying around a fisheye, but this one is an exception. It's so tiny you won't notice you've got it, but sharp enough to give genuinely usable images. Micro Four Thirds shooters looking for something a little different could do a lot worse than give it a try.

Neewer 50mm f/2

At a glance

- £72
- For mirrorless
- Covers APS-C
- Canon EF-M, Fujifilm, Nikon 1, Micro Four Thirds and Sony E mounts



This is one in a family of four similarly-styled lenses designed for APS-C mirrorless cameras, alongside 25mm f/1.8, 35mm f/1.7 and 28mm f/2.8 pancake designs. As is often the case with these lenses, you can find it sold under several brands, but while mine has a Neewer badge it's more widely available as a Meike. Stylistically it harks back to classic M42 Pentax

Takumars, with a scalloped manual-focus ring and a cut-out for the distance and depth-of-field scales. The all-metal barrel exudes quality, and both the aperture and focusing rings rotate beautifully smoothly. It even comes with an equally vintage-feeling push-on lens cap.

As usual for this kind of lens, the aperture ring is directly coupled to the diaphragm. This means you always view at the taking aperture, which gives an accurate preview of depth-of-field. Quirkily the ring itself is labelled f/2, f/2.8, f/3.5, f/5.6, f/8 and f/22, for no apparent reason other than to give an even spacing between the numbers. There's also a depth-of-field scale, which looks quite sensible until you realise that the widest marking is f/2.4. The minimum focus distance is a distinctly pedestrian 65cm, and the lens accepts 49mm filters.

Functionally, this lens behaves as a short-telephoto portrait prime of 75–80mm equivalent on APS-C, or 100mm equivalent on Micro Four Thirds. Unlike some of the other lenses here, it doesn't really impose any distinct character on you while you're shooting. Instead it's a fundamentally well-behaved lens that's easy to focus and handles nicely on a small mirrorless body. Indeed at just 32mm long, it's considerably smaller than using an adapted SLR lens. You just have to watch out for flare when shooting into the light.

When you examine your pictures after shooting, though, you'll really start to appreciate this lens's particular charms. It gives nice sharp images with attractive background blur, making it a lovely option for selective focus, shallow depth-of-field shooting. It would pair nicely with a 25mm f/1.8 prime for both APS-C and Micro Four Thirds users.

Neewer's 50mm f/2 produces really attractive images



The Olympus 9mm f/8 body cap lens resolves a surprising amount of detail

Meike 50mm f/1.7





At a glance

- £115
- For mirrorless
- Covers full-frame
- Sony E-mount

On full-frame the Meike 50mm f/1.7 renders lovely background blur

This relatively new optic is probably the cheapest native E-mount, full-frame lens available for Sony Alpha 7 users. At first sight, it looks very similar to the fast 50mm primes that were supplied with 35mm manual-focus SLRs in the 1970s and 1980s. However while it uses a similar double-Gauss formula with 6 elements in 5 groups, a closer look reveals that the optical design has been reworked to be more symmetrical, with a larger rear element. This allows the entire lens unit to be positioned closer to the sensor, giving a more compact design. Indeed it is 10mm shorter than Sony's own autofocus FE 50mm f/1.8.

In terms of construction, the lens uses an all-metal barrel, embellished by a metallic red ring at the front of the broad manual-focus ring – a design flourish that's shared with several of the firm's other lenses. The clickless aperture ring is placed at the front of the barrel, directly controlling the 12-bladed diaphragm that gives a near-circular opening at all settings. The lens focuses down to 50cm, and a bayonet mount for the supplied petal-shaped plastic hood surrounds its 52mm filter thread.

Ergonomically, this behaves somewhat differently from the other lenses on test here. Both of the control rings are distinctly stiff, and while this might help videographers to get smooth, controlled focus pulls, it hinders photographers who wish to make quick adjustments. There are no depth-of-field markings for zone focusing, and the spacings between the smaller apertures from f/8 to f/22 are tiny, despite these being commonly used on full-frame cameras. Finally, the aperture ring is difficult to distinguish from the focus ring by touch alone, and I found it all-too-easy to operate the wrong one when shooting with the camera held up to my eye.

The results, however, are worth it. The lens is sharp in the centre at f/1.8, and while the corners are soft at large apertures, they sharpen up very nicely by f/8. Naturally there's some vignetting at large apertures, but a gentle fall-off profile means it's not at all offensive, and it disappears by f/4. There's no visible distortion or lateral chromatic aberration, and background blur is rendered attractively. It's a great modern interpretation of the classic 'nifty 50'.

Testbench CHEAP CREATIVE LENSES

With its vignette plate removed, the Holga lens gives atmospheric soft-focus images



At a glance

- £15-20
- For DSLRs
- Covers full-frame
- Canon, Nikon, Pentax, Sony Alpha and Four Thirds mounts

Holga 60mm f/8

Holga's cheap toy cameras have gained a cult following, owing to their particular low-fi charms. Their simple plastic lenses give heavy vignetting and often-indistinct focus, producing a characteristic aesthetic that can give great results with the right subject.

Holgas use medium-format film, which puts off many photographers. But it turns out you can buy the same 60mm f/8 lens in a variety of DSLR mounts, often for less than £20 on eBay. Micro Four Thirds users can even pick up a 25mm f/8 version that promises similar results. Will using one get you the same dreamily beautiful images?

No, it won't. In fact, the Holga 60mm f/8 is one of the most horrible lenses you can buy.



The problem is that you're not quite getting the same lens. In an attempt to mimic vignetting on a DSLR that's similar to the much larger 6x6cm negative, the manufacturer has added an aperture plate at the back, with a small central hole surrounded by eight even tinier ones. The result is a lens that lets in minimal light – much less than its f/8 designation suggests – making it a struggle to focus or even compose your images through the viewfinder. What's more, the resultant artificial vignetting pattern is ugly in the extreme, especially on a full-frame camera.

There is, however, a solution. It's possible, with a sharp knife and a little force, to prise off that offending aperture plate. Then the lens becomes much more usable, giving soft, low-contrast images that can be sort-of interesting. If you want that heavily vignettied look, just add it back in post-processing.

Lensbaby Spark

US-based Lensbaby makes a quirky range of selective-focus lenses, with the idea being for photographers to express their creativity by using optics that are, by any conventional standard, deeply flawed. The Lensbaby Spark is really nothing more than a single-element glass 50mm f/8 lens placed within a flexible tube. By compressing and angling this tube, the photographer can focus selectively on the subject, leaving it surrounded by ever-increasing blur. This gives a look that is near-impossible to recreate in software.

The problem, though, is that it's also very difficult to control in-camera, as the focusing screens of modern DSLRs are notoriously poor for judging manual focusing. The lens itself is extremely unsharp, and flares dramatically at the merest hint of bright light, resulting in distinctly lo-fi images. It's a look, and a process, that you'll either love or hate.

Unfortunately, I have to admit this is a lens I really struggle to get along with.

Kamlan 50mm f/1.1

At £170 the Kamlan 50mm f/1.1 may be the most expensive lens here, but this is still a staggeringly low price for such a fast maximum aperture. Indeed it's half of what you'd pay for the Samyang 50mm f/1.2 AS UMC CS, which is itself remarkable value.

The Kamlan is also unexpectedly small, measuring just 60mm in both diameter and length and sporting a 52mm filter thread. It has a surprisingly simple optical formula, with 5 elements in 5 groups. Even classic 50mm f/1.8s use 6 elements, while the Samyang employs a 9-element, 7-group design.

The lens is nicely constructed though, with an all-metal barrel and smoothly rotating focus and aperture rings. The latter is clickless, with wide spacing between stops that allows fine adjustment. The 12-bladed diaphragm gives a near-circular opening all the way down to its f/16 minimum setting. A yellow ring around the barrel provides a

With its f/1.1 aperture, this lens can dissolve away backgrounds



cosmetic flourish, while a shallow plastic lens hood comes in the box.

This probably isn't the best lens to use when you need ultra-sharp detail all the way across the frame; a cheap 50mm f/1.8 will do that better. But that's not why you should be buying an f/1.1 lens. Instead this optic is all about selective focusing, with vanishingly

At a glance

- £170
- For mirrorless
- Covers APS-C
- Canon EF-M, Fujifilm, Sony E, Micro Four Thirds

shallow depth-of-field and beautifully blurred backgrounds. It has the characteristics of a classic portrait lens, with some flattering softness wide open due to spherical aberration, and noticeably crisper detail on stopping down to f/2. There's a touch of chromatic aberration at large apertures, but less than I'd expect. Play to its strengths and it'll give lovely images.



The Lensbaby Spark gives a characteristic selective-focus effect

I find it easiest to use on a mirrorless camera, as a good electronic viewfinder makes composition much easier. Overall I'd add it to the ranks of 'could be worth

a try, if you like that sort of thing'. Some photographers will love it and use it to take great shots, but it's not the kind of lens I'd choose on a regular basis.

At a glance

- £80
- For DSLRs
- Covers full-frame
- Canon and Nikon mounts



1839: Daguerreotype camera lens

To begin at the beginning, the first classic camera lens must be the one used by the camera that introduced the world's first viable method of photography. That was the daguerreotype camera. Its lens was made by Paris opticians Charles and Vincent Chevalier in a plano-convex design (curved on one side, flat on the other) that gave a focal length of 15.5in and a working aperture of $f/14$. The lens was bound in brass, while a pivoting cover plate on the front acted as a crude shutter.

The daguerreotype camera used a simple plano-convex lens



© AKELI MAN

Ten classic lenses from photo

John Wade is your guide to some of the most interesting lenses ever made

Lenses came before cameras. In fact, many of the best-known names in photography – Leitz, Zeiss and Voigtländer to name but three – began life as lens and optical instrument makers before diversifying into camera manufacture.

The earliest camera lenses consisted of a single piece of glass with a convex curve on both sides. While this could focus an image on a flat area, it couldn't bring light rays of different colours to the same point of focus, resulting in what is known as chromatic aberration. To correct this, lens designers began combining groups of lenses, with both convex and concave surfaces, in such a way that they cancelled out each other's aberrations and so produced a sharper image. In this way, camera lenses were developed and evolved.

Famous lens names echo through the history of photography: Biotar, Flektagon, Helios, Nikkor, Nokton, Rokkor, Skopar, Skoparon, Sonnar, Summar, Summicron, Takumar, Tessar, Ultron, Xenotar, Zuiko... the list goes on and on. We could fill these pages with the story of the development and evolution of these and other lens landmarks. But we're not going to do that.

Instead, here's a quick overview of some of the longest, shortest, biggest, smallest, widest and fastest lenses in photographic history, along with the cameras with which many of them were so inextricably linked.

1840: The Petzval

Named after its designer, Austrian scientist Josef Max Petzval, this was the first photographic lens where the design was computed mathematically before construction. Using two pairs of elements separated by a space, it had an aperture of $f/3.6$, which allowed shorter-than-before shutter speeds that made daguerreotype portraiture truly feasible. An all-metal Voigtländer camera fitted with the Petzval lens in 1841 became the first purpose-made portrait camera. In 2013, 3,000 Kickstarter backers funded the production of a modern version of the Petzval lens for use on DSLRs.

Replica of the all-metal Voigtländer daguerreotype camera with Petzval lens



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1859: Sutton's liquid lens

Inspired by one of those water-filled toys that are shaken to create a snowstorm inside a dome, English photographer Thomas Sutton patented a lens encompassing a sphere of glass filled with water, capable of producing images on a curved surface. The result was one of the world's first wideangle lenses, with a 120° angle of view and a central stop of f/12. It is most famous for being used in the Sutton Panoramic wet-plate camera successfully made, after a false start by its first manufacturer, by London optician and instruments maker Thomas Ross in 1861.

Sutton panoramic camera, famous for using Sutton's liquid lens



MTO 500 mirror lens on a Zenith SLR, both mounted on a purpose-built rifle stock type shutter trigger and focusing control



1944: MTO 500 catadioptric lens

The first general-purpose catadioptric, or mirror, lens came from Russia. The configuration of this type of lens sees light enter through the front element to hit a concave mirror at the back of the lens barrel, from where it is reflected to another mirror behind the front element, back through an aperture in the rear mirror and out through traditional lens elements on to the film. The result is a long focal length in a shorter-than-normal lens barrel. For the MTO, that meant a 500mm focal length in a barrel only 180mm long and 80mm diameter. It focused down to 4m and the aperture was fixed at f/8. Mirror lenses enjoyed popularity mostly in the 1960s and 1970s.

history

1953: The De Vere Long Tom

It was Coronation Day and the press needed a picture of Elizabeth II on the balcony of Buckingham Palace. The problem was, they couldn't get close enough, and telephoto lenses for the large-format cameras used by press photographers in those days were not available. So De Vere, more famous for its enlargers, built one for the purpose. The lens had a 1,000mm focal length and used a 5x4in film back from a Graflex camera. Only three were made. This one was used by *The Star* newspaper (now defunct and no connection to today's *Daily Star*).

One of only three Long Tom lenses, made by De Vere



Zoomar lens on Voigtlander Bessamatic



1959: Voigtlander Zoomar

There were zoom lenses for television and film cameras before this one, but the Zoomar was the first production zoom lens for a 35mm still camera. It was designed by optical engineer Frank G Back, who also coined the word 'zoom', when applied to lenses. Compared to today, the focal length range of 36–82mm was small but successfully covered wideangle to medium telephoto on a 35mm format. The zoom was operated by a push-pull control around the barrel, and the maximum aperture was f/2.8. Although eventually made in a variety of lens mounts, the Zoomar was mostly associated with the Voigtlander Bessamatic 35mm SLR.

Testbench CLASSIC LENSES

1966: Zeiss Planar 50mm f/0.7

In 1928, Zeiss formulated the design for what would one day be the world's fastest lens. In 1941, the German Nazi party funded its development for use in equipment to guide weapons at night, resulting in a 70mm f/1 lens. Then, in 1966, American space agency NASA revived the project to produce a lens capable of photographing the dark side of the moon. Zeiss completed production of ten 50mm f/0.7 lenses, of which NASA bought six, Zeiss kept one and film director Stanley Kubrick bought three to shoot a candle-lit scene in his film *Barry Lyndon*.



The super-fast Zeiss Planar 50mm f/0.7 lens



The super-wide 6mm Fisheye-Nikkor

1972: 6mm f/2.8 Fisheye-Nikkor

If you thought 180° was a super-wide angle of view for a fisheye lens, think again. This one took in 220° which meant – wait for it – the lens could look behind itself! This nine-element lens weighed in at 5kg, and had a front element diameter of 20cm. It was a retrofocus design, which meant that, unlike non-retrofocus lenses, the rear element did not foul the movement of an SLR's mirror. At f/22, depth of field was 17cm to infinity.



The autofocus 50mm f/2 AF Rikenon

1980: 50mm f/2 AF Rikenon

Made by Ricoh in Japan, this was the first autofocus lens made to work with any manual-focus 35mm SLR that used the popular K mount. Using what the manufacturer called solid-state triangulation, it worked much like a traditional rangefinder, but with a sensor taking the place of the human eye. On to this sensor were projected twin images from two rangefinder-like windows. As the lens was activated, one mirror swung so that one image on the sensor moved in relation to the other. The sensor recognised when the two coincided as a point where maximum contrast was detected and information was passed to a motor that rotated the lens for correct focus.

1993: Canon EF 1200mm f/5.6L USM

At the time of its launch, Canon claimed this was the longest focal length lens available for any interchangeable-lens autofocus SLR. It weighed 16.5kg, measured 22.8x83.6cm, had a maximum aperture of f/5.6, an angle of view of just 2.05° and a minimum focusing distance of 14m. The lens was almost entirely hand built, using two huge fluorite crystals which took a year to grow before being ground and polished. It was compatible with Canon's 2x Extender, which increased the focal length to an incredible 2,400mm and reduced the maximum aperture to f/11. Only 20 of the lenses were made.



The super-long Canon EF 1200mm USM telephoto

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Hoya NX-10 Circular Polariser

Andy Westlake tests Hoya's budget range of polarising filters

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Back in the days of film, enthusiast photographers carried all manner of optical filters to enhance their images. But in the Photoshop age it's tempting to believe that all the same things can be done in post-processing, so there's no need to bother. However this isn't entirely true, and one filter that you simply can't replicate after shooting is the polariser.

For those unfamiliar with their action, these filters rely on the fact that some of the light in everyday scenes is polarised, including the blue of skies and reflections off water or glass. Using a polarising filter allows the photographer to block or pass this light selectively. As a result, it's possible to deepen blue skies, eliminate distracting glare off windows, or enrich reflections in water. Indeed polarisers can benefit almost any photo shot in sunlight. Rotating the filter varies the effect.

Like anything else, it's possible to buy polarisers cheaply from online marketplaces. But low-quality examples can cause vignetting, or introduce strange colour casts that are difficult to correct. So it's best to buy a known brand from a reputable retailer.

Hoya's NX-10 circular polarisers were introduced earlier this year, as a reasonably priced option for beginners and serious amateur photographers. They come in sizes from 37mm to 82mm, at prices ranging from £41 to £126. One point of concern is that unlike the firm's NX-10 UV filters, or the more expensive Ultra-Pro polarisers, these are described as uncoated.

Verdict

Hoya's NX-10 filters may look expensive compared to the cheapest polarisers you can buy, but they are well-made and work very effectively. They screw in easily without binding, and rotate very smoothly. I used them with lenses as wide as 15mm on full-frame without any vignetting.

Comparing files shot with and without a filter (right), using my 24MP Sony Alpha 7 II and 24-70mm f/4 lens, revealed a highly effective polarising effect at the cost of a 2-stop light loss, and with no detrimental effect on image sharpness. Using controlled lighting I measured a tiny blue cast of around 300 K under daylight, but it's barely noticeable in real-world shots. Many cameras will correct it with their auto white balance, anyway.

Despite the lack of coating, I had few problems with flare, even when shooting in bright summer sunlight. But just occasionally I saw some additional reflections attributable to the filter, so it's advisable to look out for this (and of course, always use a hood). That aside, the Hoya NX-10 circular polarisers are a great choice for budget-conscious enthusiasts.

At a glance

- Circular polarising filter
- Slimline frame
- Available in 37mm–82mm sizes

Easy grip

A finely ridged grip on the non-rotating section makes it easy to attach the filter to your lens, while the knurled front edge aids rotation.

Alignment mark

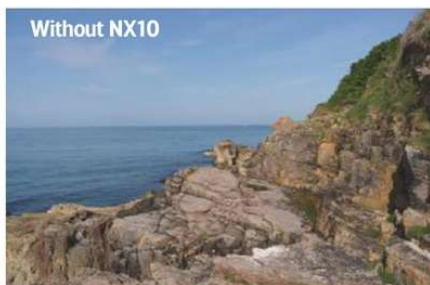
A small triangular mark on the rotating mount is designed to help you judge the optimum polarising position.

Wideangle friendly

The 6mm-thick mount should be slender enough to avoid vignetting on the widest of lenses.

Small sizes

In addition to the usual SLR-lens sizes, the filters are available in sizes down to 37mm, ideal for small mirrorless-camera lenses.



Without NX10



With NX10

Hoya's NX-10 filters provide effective polarising on a budget



ALSO CONSIDER

Hoya Ultra-Pro polarisers

For serious photographers who demand the best results, Hoya's Ultra-Pro range is a premium alternative that was introduced at the same time as the NX-10. These filters offer higher light transmission and include multicoating to minimise glare, and earned a 5-star award when we reviewed them earlier this year (AP 3 March 2018).





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A walking pole that's also a monopod

Q I have a pair of walking poles to support me when walking. As a photographer, I remember hearing about a pole that can be used as a monopod, but I can't remember where I saw it. Do you know of anyone who deals in them?

Bill Houlder

A Gitzo used to produce the Monotrek, which would have been ideal, but sadly it is no longer available. Manfrotto, a sibling company to Gitzo, also has a product like this in its catalogue but it also seems to be unavailable at the moment, though I did see it being sold on eBay. Maybe Hama's Alpenpod (right) would be a suitable alternative, and this seems to be in stock with a number of outlets.

Canon EOS M6 and EF lenses

Q I recently bought a Canon EOS M6. I have five non-EF-M lenses, so I bought the adapter ring. However, as everyone knows, this means I can't use autofocus. Is there any way around this, or will Canon rectify this somehow, one day?

Bill Richards



The Meike MK-C-AF4 adapter ring



Zhiyun Smooth Q gimbal with Huawei P20 Pro smartphone

Q The reviews persuaded me to upgrade from my old Samsung Galaxy S7 to the Huawei P20 Pro. Its triple-camera Leica lens set-up is awesome. I bought a Zhiyun Smooth Q gimbal for my S7 last year and would like to use it with my P20 Pro, but I can't get it to work with the phone's own camera app. This is rather important because the Zhiyun camera app can't access any of the P20 Pro's advanced features such as the zoom function or the raw-file 'Pro' shooting mode. My friend has the similar-looking SPG Live gimbal from FeiyuTech. He doesn't have a P20 Pro but he does use his phone's native camera app (he has an iPhone 8). Do you have any tips for getting the Smooth Q to work with the P20 Pro?

Abi Hewson

A Something doesn't sound right. EF and EF-S lenses will autofocus using the official Canon EF-EOS M Mount adapter, and should also work with third-party alternatives such as the Meike MK-C-AF4. Perhaps there is something wrong with your adapter? Check that the electrical contact pins and pads are clean and in otherwise good condition. It's worth noting that unless you are using STM versions of EF-S lenses, autofocus in video mode is not supported.

WD MyPassport Wireless Pro problem

Q I've been searching for a way to back up the CF cards from my Canon EOS 7D for a long time – and then I found Andy Westlake's online review of the WD MyPassport Wireless Pro, which I found very helpful indeed – particularly when he mentions, 'Accepts an external reader to back up other card types, such as Compact Flash...' And so I purchased it – and also a new Anker card reader – as recommended on the WD website. However, the device refuses to recognise the card reader – or any of my SanDisk CF cards plugged into it. I cannot get any sensible answers from WD, and so as Andy clearly made this facility work, I'd be very grateful for your help.

Norman Jonas

A This feature certainly works on my WD MyPassport Wireless Pro, but it can be a bit picky regarding exactly what you do. Most importantly, I've found that when backing up compact flash cards, it won't work if I plug the card reader into the device and then insert the card, but works fine if I put the card into the reader first. Also, if you prefer it to back up your cards automatically without having to press the copy button, you'll need to configure this for USB drives using the WD MyCloud app, as well as for SD cards. All I can suggest is to experiment and if necessary, try a different card reader.

Andy Westlake



A portable hard drive – the WD MyPassport Wireless Pro

A The Zhiyun Smooth Q gimbal is completely locked into its own camera app. You can't even start a Bluetooth connection between your phone and gimbal without using the app. Other gimbals, such as the FeiyuTech SPG Live, can connect without the related gimbal app. The gimbal can then be configured as an external wireless keyboard so you can map the gimbal controls to your choice of buttons, and hence, with a bit of luck, the gimbal can

be used with the native camera app. The Smooth Q is a nice gimbal but the inflexibility of its Bluetooth support is an important disadvantage for many. I've seen reports that simple Bluetooth remote shooting controllers, like those bundled with selfie-sticks, can be a workaround. Of course, the stabilising action of the gimbal is unimpaired and works without the app.

Q&A compiled by Ian Burley



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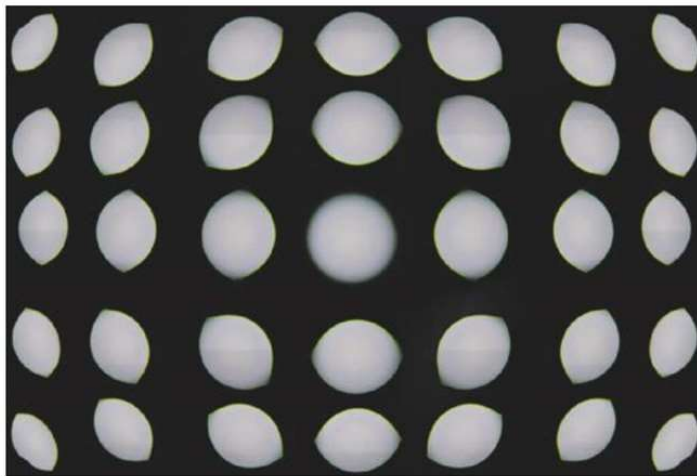
Professor Newman on...

Ultra-fast lenses

What do you really get with an ultra-fast lens and how is it constrained by the design of digital sensors?

The recent announcement of an f/0.95 lens available in Nikon F-mount (the new Meyer-Optik 'Nocturnus') seems to have confounded much informed opinion that such a thing was impossible. I suspect that the information backing this opinion was mostly conjecture, since by my calculations the F-mount is just large enough to contain the exit pupil of an f/0.95 lens. The lens would need to do away with an aperture lever, but now that Nikon has electronic aperture control, this isn't so much of a problem. What is something of a problem is that the limits of the mirror box and mechanism intrude somewhat on the light cone coming from an f/0.95 lens, so it might be that if you fit such a lens to a Nikon camera, you won't see the full f/0.95's worth of light. That most likely applies to any DSLR.

So, the outcome of this discussion seems to be that ultra-fast lenses such as this are the preserve of mirrorless cameras, another plus factor for them. Unfortunately, there is another constraint at work – the design of digital sensors. All modern sensors use microlenses to focus the incident light on the active area of the pixel. These microlenses are part of the overall optical system of the camera, and such optical systems are subject to a property known as 'conservation of étendue'. Étendue measures the acceptance or exit spread of light, and part of the optical theory concerned tells us that the smallest étendue in the system defines that of the system as a whole. What that means in theory, is that if your camera's sensor's microlenses are, say, f/2, then you'll only ever gather f/2's worth



The central point function has reduced intensity at the periphery

of light, however wide an aperture lens you put on it.

That's the theory. The practice is a little more complex. Sensor microlenses are hardly well-corrected lenses with a well-defined focal length, so there is not a sharp cut-off. From various tests done, including by DxOmark, it seems that in the majority of cameras there is a fall-off that starts at f/2.0 or so and gets progressively greater. While this means that you get more from, say, an f/1.4 lens than you do from an f/1.8, it might not be as much more as you expected. This might not be immediately apparent, because, as DxOmark discovered, camera manufacturers may make a firmware correction for the effect.

Interesting possibilities

For some time it has been an open question whether this effect also impacts the out-of-focus blur of bokeh from the lens. Some pundits maintained that it didn't. For me, I found it hard to convince myself that there would be no impact at all – if the sensor can't 'see' the outer parts of the lens,

how can they contribute to the out-of-focus blur? This was a discussion I was having with Jim Kasson, a highly knowledgeable contributor to the DPRReview.com forums. Jim runs his own website documenting his thinking on various issues (<https://blog.kasson.com>). Presently he is running a series of experiments to characterise the 'point spread function' of various lenses in order to see if he can accurately model their bokeh. Jim offered to run a series of tests on an f/0.95 lens mounted on a Sony Alpha 7R II.

The image above (used with Jim's permission) shows the results. The central point spread function, rather than having a sharp cut-off, has reduced intensity at the periphery, as Jim noted, like an apodised lens. Apodised lenses have an internal filter which blocks some of the light from the periphery, resulting in smoother bokeh. I'm now wondering if this effect explains why many ultra-fast lenses are valued for smooth bokeh. The investigation is not yet conclusive, but an interesting possibility.

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4/3rds Lenses

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Panasonic 14-50mm F3.5-5.6 Vario Elmar.....	E++ £199
Olympus 14-54mm F2.8-3.5 Zuiko.....	Exc / E++ £79 - £129
Samyang 16mm F2.0 ED AS UMC CS.....	Mint- £239
Olympus 18-180mm F3.5-6.3 Zuiko.....	E++ £179
Sigma 24mm F1.8 EX DG.....	E++ £189
Olympus 25mm F2.8 Zuiko.....	E+ £119
Olympus 40-150mm F3.5-4.5 Zuiko.....	E++ £39 - £49
Olympus 40-150mm F4-5.6 ED Zuiko.....	E++ £49
Olympus 50mm F2.8 ED Macro Zuiko.....	E++ £159
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Olympus 7-14mm F2.8 PRO M.Zuiko ED.....	Mint- £789
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Olympus 9-18mm F4-5.6 M.Zuiko ED.....	Mint- £269
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Olympus 12mm F2.8 ED M.Zuiko - Silver.....	Mint- £429
Samyang 12mm F2.8 NCS CS - Black.....	E++ / Mint- £219 - £239
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Olympus 14-42mm F3.5-5.6 EZ M.Zuiko.....	Mint- £139
Panasonic 14-42mm F3.5-5.6 G X Vario OIS.....	E++ / Mint- £139
Olympus 14-42mm F3.5-5.6 M.Zuiko.....	E++ £69
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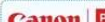


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Final Analysis

Roger Hicks considers...

'Ex-prisoners Riaan and Armiena in their Shack, Cape Town 2005', by Mikhael Subotzky



The work of South African photographer Mikhael Subotzky does not so much defy categorisation as elude it. At first sight it looks like social documentary but the longer you look, the more it slides into... well, that's the problem: I can't categorise it. Google him; you'll find plenty of hits, from Magnum to the Saatchi gallery to his own site. Then you'll be able to make up your own mind. If you can.

The reason I chose this picture is that it (sort of) directly follows on from last week's *Final Analysis* photograph of Aunt Julia. She, you may recall, was a 102-year-old ex-slave who lived in a tumbledown shack, a former corn crib, in Arkansas. From the look of things, Riaan and Armiena's place in Cape Town, South Africa, is pretty rough, too, almost 170 years later.

Another dimension

The two styles of photography are, at first sight, very different. Last week's was painstakingly literal, a detailed record shot. This one is loose almost to the point of incomprehensibility – until you explain who they are and where they are. Then again, the caption adds another dimension to the picture of the ex-slave too: the two pictures have much more in common than is immediately obvious.

Subtexts within subtexts

Pictorially, it's confusing. Riaan is at the window working; it is at first hard to tell whether Armiena is a silhouette or a shadow. There's

an apparent conflict, too, between the caption – 'ex-prisoners', remember – and the most immediate subtext of the photograph, which is 'poor but honest': he is diligently repairing the house, and she is presumably responsible for the clean washing that is drying on the line. But the house is described as a shack (just in case you hadn't noticed the cracks); you can see the dirt and wear on the door; and it is not entirely clear that there is even glass in the window.

There is little in the way of conventional chiaroscuro. His head is brutally lit by harsh sun; hers, all but lost against the door. And arguably, the (slightly overexposed) washing

on the line distracts us from both of them. This is however another subtext: the harshness of the climate, their environment, their perhaps chaotic past. We cannot help but wonder about their convictions, their sentences, how they came to be together in this house. The picture, just like the caption, reminds us that we do not all lead comfortable or easily compartmentalised lives.

Counting our blessings

The admonishment to count our blessings is always a double-ended spear. On the one hand, yes, most of us could be much, much worse off. But on the other hand we could also be better off. So could most of humanity. Instead of thinking only about how to make life better for ourselves, it's a good idea sometimes to think about how we could make life better for everyone.

'The picture, like the caption, reminds us that we do not all lead comfortable or easily compartmentalised lives'

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